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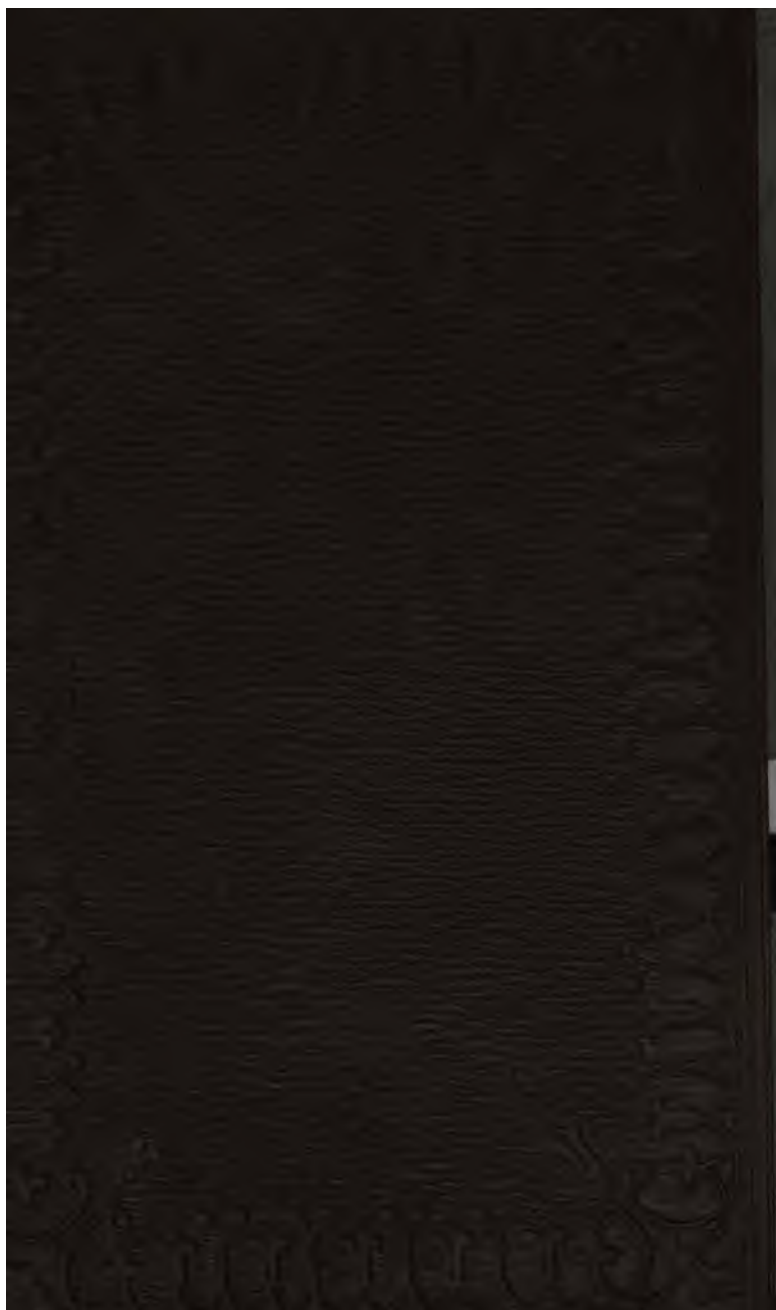
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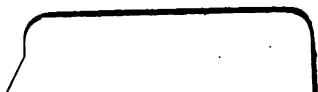




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THE THREE GRAVES.

SPIRITUAL HEROES;
OR,
SKETCHES OF THE PURITANS,
THEIR CHARACTER AND TIMES!

BY
JOHN STOUGHTON.



“Hah! these men, I think, had a work. History will have something to say about this for some time to come.”—CARLYLE.

SECOND EDITION, WITH IMPORTANT ADDITIONS.

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1850.

PREFACE.

"THE law of optics is reversed in history." The events and characters of a past age are often more accurately discerned, and more correctly appreciated, than the circumstances which now surround us and the men among whom we live. Hence we meet with persons, who, while they brand with the stigma of fanaticism certain classes among the living, are quite prepared to bind the wreath of honour round the memories of men similar in sentiment and character, but who are now numbered among the dead. The remark forcibly applies to the judgment formed of the Puritans. Contemporaries traduced and vilified them. Historians of the next age, influenced by prejudice, gave to these calumnies implicit credence. But time has been gradually removing the old Puritans to a distance which subdues the force of passion in the mind of the beholder; and historical research, especially of late, has brought facts to light which have tended to vindicate them from the unjust charges preferred by their enemies. Thus public opinion has, to

some extent, been rectified in reference to these memorable characters. They are emerging from the clouds of slander,—their virtue and heroism begin to excite general admiration: but it must not be forgotten that much more remains to be done by the historian, before the debt of justice will be fully paid to their long-dishonoured names.

The Puritans, taking the word in its old-fashioned and comprehensive signification, saved England in the seventeenth century from a relapse into Popery. On this account they deserve to be honoured and loved by the Protestants of the present day. In all probability the salvation of England from such a relapse in the nineteenth century will depend, under God, upon the men who imbibe their sentiments, and emulate their piety and heroism. From the beginning, Puritanism has been the soul of English Protestantism; and therefore its history deserves to be diligently studied, and its spirit gratefully revered, by all who really value the cause of the Reformation.

It is not the design of the Author to write a history of the Puritans. He would venture only on a few sketches of their character and times, chiefly with a view to illustrate their spiritual heroism. It has struck him that there are names and incidents in Puritan annals deserving more attention than they have received. Some of these are intro-

duced in the following chapters: they will be found to reflect honour on the cause with which they are identified, and to purify and elevate the mind employed in contemplating them. It would have been easy to multiply sketches of this kind; but in order to bring the work within proper limits, the Author has had to reject several which suggested themselves to his mind. He has not confined himself to the highways of history, but has wandered frequently into bye-paths, where interesting objects have attracted and repaid his humble researches. In executing his task, he has attempted the *painting* rather than the *sculpture* of history, not confining himself to the exhibition of groups in bold relief, or in forms of statuary, but aiming to represent alike the men and the times in which they lived, combining them as in a picture,—the former constituting the leading figures, the latter the background of the composition. Guizot speaks of the anatomy, the physiology, and the physiognomy of history,—very important distinctions for the historian to remember. It is that branch of the pictorial art of history which represents the last of these that the Author ventures to attempt. He would fain paint his heroes as living men, their souls beaming in their countenances, and vividly transfer to others the deep impressions which they have made upon his own mind.

The materials for the volume now laid before the public have been collected partly from our standard historical authorities, and partly from unpublished documents and local tradition, as well as scarce and curious tracts. During a visit last summer to the county of Norfolk, the Author was permitted to search the Corporation books of his native city, and the ecclesiastical records of the Old Meeting-house. He was also favoured by his friend, Joseph Davy, Esq., of Yarmouth, with the use of three valuable MS. volumes :—1. A History of St. Nicholas' Church ; 2. A Copy of the Church-Book of the Independent Meeting-house, Jail-street ; and 3. Materials for a History of the Suffolk Churches, by the Rev. Thomas Harmer, of Wattisfield, the learned author of the "Observations on Scripture." From these sources the Author derived most valuable assistance, especially in the chapter on the East Anglian Churches, which, indeed, is almost entirely drawn up from these documents. There can be no doubt that many valuable papers of this kind are in existence ; and it would be well if persons accustomed to antiquarian researches would devote themselves to this neglected branch of inquiry, and thus collect and preserve materials of an order greatly to assist the future historians of Puritan life and times. The Author feels that his thanks are especially due to the gentleman already

named, as well as to the Rev. J. Russell, of Yarmouth, who kindly assisted him in his inquiries; and also to the Rev. Dr. Raffles, Joshua Wilson, Esq., and other friends, for the loan of MSS. and rare books. For the beautiful etching, of which the frontispiece to this Edition is a reduced engraving, he is indebted to Miss Brightwell, of Norwich, whose taste he has no need to praise, but whose kindness he would gratefully acknowledge.

In this Second Edition the Author has corrected several typographical and other small errors which had crept into the first, and has added a new chapter respecting Baxter at Kidderminster, compiled chiefly from his unpublished MSS. in Red Cross Street Library. An additional note has also been inserted, relating to Morley Chapel, near Leeds, Yorkshire.

In the selection of his materials and the mode of employing them, he has especially sought to interest the youthful part of the community. Earnestly would he invite them to study the lives and sufferings of these exiled confessors and martyrs, in whose humble annals they will find much of truth to instruct their understanding, and much of romantic beauty to kindle their imaginations (little as that quality is generally thought to be allied to Puritanism and Nonconformity), and much of Christian heroism to *thrill their hearts and elevate their piety.*

On reviewing his labours, the Author can fully sympathize with the equally ingenious and ingenuous Abraham Tucker, in his characteristic confession,—“While the design of these dissertations lay in embryo in my head, they promised a much more shining appearance than I find them make now I can review them on paper.” He therefore submits his work to the public with great diffidence, conscious that, though his conceptions of the theme in the first instance were very imperfect, their expression in the following pages is still more so.

In conclusion, while the Author would bespeak the candour of his readers, he would, above all, invoke the blessing of God. The cause of Puritanism is the cause of spiritual religion. The men in question were greatly beloved of Heaven. To exhibit their characters in the true light, to revive or perpetuate the memory of their excellence, is an act of piety. To the favour of Him, then, who is the God of truth, and to whom the names of His saints are precious, this work is humbly and devoutly commended.

“For all is in His hand, whose praise I seek,—
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation prosper even mine.”

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SPIRITUAL HEROES.

CHAPTER I.

● THE ISLINGTON CONGREGATION.

It was on May-day, A. D. 1558,* when Mary occupied the throne of England, that "a certain companie of godlie and innocent persons, to the number of forty men and women," met together in a back close in the field near St. John's Wood, by the town of Islington. Wonderful changes have been wrought since then in the whole of the neighbourhood. The "Iseldon" of that day was a pretty little village, surrounded by fields, sprinkled with gardens, wherein, as Stow informs us, "were built many fair summer-houses, some of them like Midsummer pageants, with towers, turrets, and chimney-tops, not so much for use or profit, as for show and pleasure." On the return of spring, the Londoners loved to ramble amidst its rural scenes, and to drink in the balmy breezes which swept over from the Highgate hills; and in the merry month of

* Foxe, ii. 1850. *Roger Holland's examination.*

May, many a light-hearted group of citizens might be seen going up Goswell-street, with "its alleys, banqueting-houses, and bowling-places," to gather, in the fields and pleasure-grounds round Islington, branches and flowers for their gardens. And on May-day the richly-garnished May-pole was duly erected on the green, gathering round it the youths and maidens of the village to celebrate their ancient games.

But it was for a far different purpose that the company had assembled in that back close. "They were," says John Foxe, "sitting together at prayer, and solemnly occupied in the meditation of God's holy Word." They were earnest souls, recently emancipated from the bondage of Popery,—a band of worshippers, tired of the idolatry and formalism of the Papal Church, and convinced that they who worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth, —a band of students, weary of the mental slavery of Rome, and thirsting for a full acquaintance with the Book that God had given them. For centuries the Bible had been withheld from the people. The story told of the *Cathach*, a MS. of the Psalms, said to be written by St. Columba, the great Irish saint, may be taken as symbolical of the history of the Scriptures throughout the mediæval period. Enshrined in a magnificent case, carried as a sacred standard before the warrior in battle, employed as a solemn sanction in the taking of oaths, the *Cathach* was preserved in the highest veneration from age to age; but it was strictly forbidden, under pain of some awful calamity, that the mysterious volume should ever be opened. So had the Bible throughout the middle ages been treated. It

was revered, but it was closed. There were, however, many at the time of which we speak, like the Islington worthies, who had broken the spell, and had dared to open the sealed book.

The parties who met in the woods of Islington, to feed upon the truth, assembled there from necessity, not from choice,—they were under the ban of persecution. Their faith exposed them to the charge of heresy,—their worship to the charge of schism. So numerous had been the recent examples of burning people for such crimes, that they were well aware of the peril they incurred. They belonged to a party of Christians, to whom frequent reference is made in the documents connected with the early history of English Protestantism. “Although,” says George Withers, in his letter to the Prince Elector Palatine, speaking of the reign of Queen Mary, “the Church seemed at first to be entirely overthrown, and the godly were dispersed in every quarter, yet a congregation of some importance collected itself in London, chose its ministers by common consent, appointed deacons, and in the midst of enemies, more sharp-sighted than Argus, and more cruel than Nero, the Church of God was again restored entire, and, in a word, complete in all its parts. And though it was often dispersed by the attacks of its enemies, and a very great number of its members perished at the stake, it nevertheless grew and increased every day.”*

This Congregational Church had to worship in secret, and remarkable instances of the providential escape of its members are related by Foxe. At Black-

* See Note [1] at the end of the volume.

friars, about Aldgate, and in a cloth-worker's loft in a strait alley, "near the Great Conduit of sweet water in Cheape," they assembled privately, and were detected by spies; but through "the Lord's vigilant providence the mischief was prevented, and they delivered." "Another like escape they made in a ship at Billingsgate, belonging to a certain good man of Ley, where, in the open sight of the people, they were congregated together, and yet through God's mighty power escaped. Betwixt Radcliffe and Redriffe, in a ship, called Jesus' Ship, (so they had a floating chapel in those times,) twice or thrice they assembled, having there closely, after their accustomed manner, both sermon, prayer, and communion, and yet, through the protection of the Lord, they returned, although not unespied, yet untaken."

The numbers which assembled on different occasions varied from forty to two hundred. Their prospects and increase, from time to time, are distinctly noticed by Foxe and others. Nor did they lack a succession of strong-hearted men to watch over them in the pastoral office, despite of persecution and death. The list of their honourable names has been preserved: Scambler, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, whence he was translated to the see of Norwich; Fowler, whose name alone remains; John Rough, formerly one of the Black Friars at Stirling, and the friend of young John Knox; Augustine Bernheir, a foreigner, who resided with Latimer, witnessed his martyrdom, and collected and published his sermons; and Thomas Bentham, who was raised by Elizabeth to the see of Lichfield and Coventry. Strype mentions Rose among

the pastors of this Church. Such a succession of pastors, in the space of a few years, shows how troublous were the times, and how much of moral heroism was to be found in the witnesses for truth. Rough was a noble character. He had zealously preached the gospel in many of the northern parts of England, and had been obliged to flee to the Continent, where he and his wife supported themselves by knitting caps and hose; but he returned to England in 1557, to be the pastor of the proscribed flock. He preached to them at Islington. He had seen four Protestant martyrs burnt in that very place. There, as he said, he learned the way to die; and on a Sabbath morning, in December of the same year, he was apprehended at the Saracen's Head at Islington,—some quaint-looking old dwelling, no doubt, rich in hallowed associations of pure worship and heaven-born piety; of which building we have searched in vain for some notice or relic among the antiquities of the place. Within the walls of that building did the faithful meet on that cold December morning, under pretence, as it appears, of witnessing a play,—some mystery in all likelihood, such as the Coventry or Chester plays, in which sacred stories were acted by monks and others. But the guards soon appeared. Rough, and the deacon, Cuthbert Simpson, were seized, carried before the council, and at length condemned to die. "Stand constant to the end," said this faithful martyr to his flock; "then shall ye possess your souls. Salute one another in my name. I go before. The Spirit of God guide you in and out, rising and sitting; cover you with the shadow of his wing; defend you against the tyranny

of the wicked, and bring you happily to the port of eternal felicity, where all tears shall be wiped from your eyes, and you shall always abide with the Lamb." On the 21st of December he was burnt in Smithfield.

The remembrance of his piety, of his apprehension, and his martyrdom, which perhaps some of them had witnessed, is fresh in the minds of the congregation gathered in the retired close by the town of Islington; but fidelity to conscience and to God will not allow them to forsake the assembling of themselves together. They are, for the most part, humble in circumstances—apprentices, artizans, plain honest housewives,—but we recognise in them God's true nobility. They have noble, independent souls; independent of man's authority, but most religiously obedient to the authority of God. They cannot suffer their conscience to be ensnared by worldly advantage, nor will they let it be crushed by worldly power. They are exceptions to the fashion of the times. "Religion," says the Venetian ambassador in England, writing home about this time, "though apparently thriving in this country, is, I apprehend, in some degree the offspring of dissimulation. Generally speaking, your Serene Highness may rest assured, that with the English the example and authority of the sovereign is everything, and religion is only so far valued as it inculcates the duty due from the subject to the prince. They love as he loves; believe as he believes. They would be full as zealous followers of the Mahometan and Jewish religions, did the king prefer either." The charge is no doubt too true; but the Venetian ambassador knows not of the faithful-hearted ones of the secret congregation; and

did he know them, in all probability, while he excused the mass for their pliability, he would condemn these noble exceptions as obstinate enthusiasts.

But let us watch the fate of this little company. They have not been there long, occupied in holy duties, and absorbed in the realities of eternity, when the sound of footsteps, and a suspicious-looking stranger, leaning over the hedge which encloses the field, startle the party. "Good morning!" says the stranger; "you look like men who mean no hurt." "Can you tell us," asks one of the congregation, "whose close this is, and whether we may be so bold as to sit here?" "Yes," he rejoins, "you seem to me such persons as mean no harm;" and leaves them with hearts palpitating between hope and fear. The nature of the visit just paid them is soon determined. In a quarter of an hour appears King the constable, followed by six or seven men, armed with bill and bow, who tarry a short distance behind, in a retired nook, where they are not seen. The officer advances, enters the circle, and commands the worshippers to show him their books, which they forthwith deliver. The reserve guard are summoned, and proceed at once to apprehend the party. "We are obedient, and ready to go with you," they meekly reply. Immediately they are conducted to a brewhouse, a little way off, and some of the constable's men are despatched to fetch the justice. The justice is not at home, and they must therefore be taken to Sir Roger Chomley.* Twenty-seven are arraigned before his worship, the rest having escaped from the clutches of the constables on their

* See Note [2].

way. Of one of these Foxe relates the following tale:—"The people coming very thick did cut off some of them, to the number of eight, which were behind; of whom was Bennet. Then he, knocking at the gate to come in (Sir Roger Chomley's), the porter said 'that he was none of the company.' He said 'Yes,' and knocked again. Then there stood by one of the congregation, named Johnson, dwelling now at Hammer-smith, which said, 'Edward, thou hast done well, do not tempt God, go thy way.' And so taking the warning as sent of God, with a quiet conscience eschewed burning."* Out of the twenty-seven, twenty-two were sent to Newgate.

About seven weeks passed before any of them were examined; and during that period, at Whitsuntide, two of them were released from their sufferings by the hand of death. Of the remaining twenty, only seven escaped with their lives, and some of them not without cruel scourging. "The right picture and true counterfeite of Boner and his cruelty, in scourging of God's saints in his gardens at Fulham,"—that old woodcut, in Foxe, representing the prelate with his rods lashing his victims, upon which our eyes in boyhood looked with so much terror and just indignation,—relates to one of these Islington Congregationalists. On the 17th June, Corpus Christi day,—a famous feast in the London of the olden time, when flags and garlands and rich tapestries adorned the streets, and the citizens entertained themselves with mirth and music,—the infamous proceedings of Bishop Bonner's Ecclesiastical Court stand out in dark and fearful contrast. Seven

* Foxe, ii. 1882.

of the prisoners were arraigned before him. The charges were contained in thirteen articles, amounting to the accusation,—that they had forsaken the churches, neglected the mass, and other religious rites and customs; had not allowed the Latin service; had used King Edward's Book of Common Prayer; and had gone in the time of divine service into the fields and profane places to read English Psalms and certain English books. To these charges they pleaded "guilty;" but three of the accused were prepared to admit that the Latin service, as far as it agreed with God's word, may be allowed to those who understand the language. They were examined separately, and required to reconcile themselves to the Roman Church by recanting their alleged heresies, which they refused to do, and, as a matter of course, were consigned to the hands of the secular magistrate to be executed at the stake.

One of these martyrs, whom Foxe specially notices, was Roger Holland, a merchant tailor of London, who in early life had been a profligate character, but was reclaimed by a young woman of singular piety, who had shown him great kindness, and whom he afterwards married. With the zeal of a new convert, he sought the spiritual welfare of his relatives, and repaired to his father in Lancashire with "divers good books;" so that his parents tasted of the gospel, and began to detest the mass, idolatry, and superstition, to the no small joy of the youthful Roger. Before his apprehension at Islington, he had felt the weight of Rome's injustice, for having had his first-born child christened in his house, and for going into the country to convey the babe away, "that the Papists should not

have it in their anointing hands." For these crimes his goods were seized and confiscated, and his wife cruelly used. The examination of this remarkable man is deeply interesting. He confesses that he had been a Papist—the strictest of the sect—and bears testimony to the fact,—of which the whole history of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the middle ages, presents an immense mass of examples; that the effect of a strict observance of its outward rites was to encourage the indulgence of all kinds of immorality; "albeit," he says, "I could not eat meat on the Friday, yet in swearing, drinking, or dicing, all the night long, I made no conscience at all." His Protestantism was as intelligent as it was firm, and he proved himself a theological antagonist such as Bonner found it easier to answer by firebrands than by arguments. "The antiquity of our Church," says this dauntless member of the congregation, "is not from Pope Nicholas or Pope Joan, but our Church is from the beginning, even from the time that God said unto Adam that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head; and so to faithful Noah, and all the holy fathers that were from the beginning. All they that believed these promises were of the Church, though the numbers were oftentimes but few and small, as in Elias's days, when he thought there was none but he that had not bowed their knees to Baal, when God had observed seven thousand that never had bowed their knees to that idol: as I trust there be seven hundred thousand more than I know of that have not bowed their knees to the idol, your mass, and your god Maozim. For the upholding of your Church and

religion, what antiquity can you show? yea, the mass, that idol and chief pillar of your religion, is not four hundred years old, and some of your masses are younger, as that mass of St. Thomas à Becket, the traitor, wherein you pray that you may be saved by the blood of St. Thomas. So crafty is Satan to devise these his dreams, which you defend with faggot and fire, to quench the light of the word of God, which, as David said, should be a lantern to our feet. And, again, wherein shall a young man direct his way, but by the word of God? and yet you will hide it from us in a tongue unknown. St. Paul had rather in the church have five words spoken with understanding, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue; and yet will you have your Latin service, and praying in a strange tongue, whereof the people are utterly ignorant, to be of such antiquity."

In a similar tone of intelligent and earnest feeling, he continued to defend himself on his second examination.

"Roger," began Dr. Chadsey, who assisted Bonner at the trial, "I trust you have now better considered of the Church than you did before." "I consider thus much," he said, "that out of the Church there is no salvation, as divers ancient doctors say." "That is well said," rejoined Bonner, thinking he had won somewhat upon the mind of the heretic; but he was mistaken, for, answered Roger, "I mean that Church which has Christ for her head; which also hath his word, and his sacraments, according to his word and institutions." Chadsey interrupted him, and turned the conversation by asking, "Is that a Testament

which you have in your hand?" "Yea, master, it is the New Testament; you will find no fault with the translation, I think; it is of your own translation," turning to Bonner; "it is according to the great Bible." This was a home-thrust which the bishop was quite unable to parry. It had so happened that Bonner was in Paris as English ambassador at the time when Coverdale, under Cromwell's patronage, was there, employed in superintending the printing of the great Bible; and, to gratify the minister, then so high in his master's favour, he had shown great friendship to Coverdale and his assistants, had invited them to his house to dinner, had zealously favoured the undertaking, and, on quitting Paris, had said to them, "I will have of your Bibles set up in the church of St. Paul's, at least, in sundry places, six of them, and I will pay you honestly for them, and give hearty thanks." Just then the way to court favour lay in that direction; but now times had changed. Bonner was no friend now to the translation he had encouraged and praised, and the reference made to it by Holland must have been rather mortifying to his lordship.

Evading the home appeal, he asked, "How say you? How do you know it is the Testament of Christ, but only by the Church? for the Church of Rome hath and doth preserve it, and out of the same hath made decrees, ordinances, and true expositions." "No," saith Roger; "the Church of Rome hath and doth suppress the reading of the Testament; and what a true exposition, I pray you, did the Pope make thereof when he set his foot on the Emperor's neck, and said, 'Thou shalt walk upon the lion and the asp; the

young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy foot?"

Roger was brought to the Consistory, before Bonner, a third time, with the rest of the party, when they were at once all excommunicated, except himself, for whom intercession was made by certain persons of distinction from Cheshire, from which it would appear that he was highly connected. Bonner at first treated him with apparent kindness, and sought by "rhetorical persuasions," as Foxe calls them, to recover the religious delinquent; but all in vain. On the bishop's propounding the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Sacrament, Roger Holland readily answered, "Your lordship saith, 'The same body which was born of the Virgin Mary, which was crucified upon the cross, which rose again the third day,' but you leave out, 'which ascended into heaven;' and the Scripture saith, 'He shall there remain until He come to judge the quick and dead;' then He is not contained under the forms of bread and wine." This courageous confessor concluded his testimony with the following solemn declaration:—"I say, and I beseech you all to mark and bear witness with me, for so you shall do before the judgment-seat of God, what I speak, for here is the conclusion; and ye, my dear friends," turning to his kinsmen who were present, "I pray you show my father what I do say, that he may understand I am a Christian man. I say and believe, and am therein fully persuaded by the Scriptures, that the Sacrament of the Supper of our Lord, ministered in the holy communion according to Christ's institution, I being penitent and sorry for my sins, and minding to amend

and lead a new life, and so coming worthily unto God's word, in perfect love and charity, do there receive, by faith, the body and blood of Christ; and though Christ, in his human passion, sit at the right hand of his Father, yet by faith, I say, his death, his passion, his merits, are mine, and by faith I dwell in Him, and He in me; and as for the mass, transubstantiation, and worshipping of the sacrament, they are mere impiety and horrible idolatry."

When he had witnessed this good confession, the doom of the faithful martyr was sealed, and he, together with his six companions, were adjudged to death. The 27th of June was fixed for their execution.

That morning crowds might be seen gathering in Smithfield, to gaze on a spectacle with which many of them had become sadly familiar. In an open space, in the midst of that old enclosure, stood the murderous pile, with a due supply of faggots, surrounded by barriers and officers to keep off the concourse of the people. The tenements in Long-lane, built on both sides for "brokers and tipplers," yielded their contributions of profane and thoughtless idlers. Graver and more respectable citizens were wending their way through Giltspur-street, and other avenues; while from the windows of the fair inns, and other comely buildings, which adorned with their picturesque architecture the western side of ancient Smithfield, many a face was looking out upon the dense masses in front of the church of Bartholomew Priory, whose tottering wooden steeple still rose to heaven, the memorial of a monastic house, which, before the dissolution of the abbeys in the time of Henry VIII., had stood there, in

its pomp and pride, one of the noblest ornaments of London. Some officers of the Queen pass through the crowds, and, close to the stake, repeat a proclamation, which they have already announced by the city walls, near the archway of Newgate, forbidding any of the people, under pain of imprisonment, to speak a word to the forthcoming martyrs. A band of serious persons yonder, standing close together, listen to those words with deep emotion, as men who have come to sympathize with the sufferers, and are resolved that the expression of their sympathy shall not be enchained by this merciless edict. Prominently among them stands Master Bentham, their loved and honoured pastor,—for they are no other than members of “the Congregation,” met to see their brethren die—to cheer them by their prayers, and to be themselves strengthened by examples of constancy. At length the procession moves from the Gatehouse; the seven witnesses for truth are seen emerging from their prison, attended by officers fully armed. On their approaching Smithfield, the faithful Congregation, despite of the royal edict, press forward, rendering ineffectual the attempt of the bill-men to keep them back, and affectionately embracing their brethren, bring them in their arms to the place where they are to suffer. The preparations being made for the last act of this horrid tragedy, the proclamation forbidding every expression of sympathy is read again. A dead silence reigns over the multitude as they watch the kindling of the faggots. The heroic Bentham turns his eyes to the people, and exclaims with a loud voice, “We know that they are the people of God, and therefore we

cannot choose but wish well to them, and say, God strengthen them! Almighty God, for Christ's sake, strengthen them!" The Queen's proclamation avails not,—a murmur, deep, solemn, sublime, like the sound of many waters, rolls along the multitude, echoing "Amen—Amen—Amen!" to the pastor's prayer. The officers were astounded and abashed; and the martyrs gathered strength. They lifted up their eyes to heaven as Roger Holland prayed, "Lord, I most humbly thank thy Majesty that Thou hast called me from this state of death unto the light of thy heavenly word, and now into the fellowship of thy saints, that I may sing and say, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts! Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord, bless these thy people, and save them from idolatry."

The impression was deep and universal: men left the scene in Smithfield musing on it in their hearts. Often had the praise of heroism been there bestowed on some proud knight, as he bore his lance in the tilt and tourney, and his name had been inscribed with honour in the rolls of chivalry; but the praise of an infinitely nobler heroism belonged to that martyred band. Their names are emblazoned on no herald's roll, but they are written in the book of God's remembrance, and "they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels."

They were the last who suffered at Smithfield.

Six more of the party, apprehended at Islington, were on the 13th of July burned at Brentford; and a few days afterwards, Bentham, whose mind and heart were filled with recent events, sat down and wrote the following letter to his friend Thomas Lever:—

* See Note [3].

“The grace and favour of Almighty God be with you and your godly congregation, Amen. My duty binding me to remember my dear friends, and our great dangers moving me to desire their help, inforce me at this present, both to write unto you, and desire your most godly and effectual prayers, dear brother, and loving friend, Mr. Lever; for now I stand in the gap, whereas you have so earnestly talked with me. Now, therefore, help me with your prayers, and I shall think that you stand present at my back or on my right hand. While I was in Germany, at liberty of body, having sufficient for it for the time, I was yet many times in great grief of mind and terrible torments of hell; and now here, being every moment of an hour in danger of taking, and fear of bodily death, I am in mind, the Lord be praised, most quiet and joyful, seeing the fervent zeal of so many, and such increase of our congregation, in the midst of this cruel and violent persecution.

“What should I say, but *a Domino factum est*? There were seven men burned in Smithfield, the 27th day of June, altogether; a fearful and cruel proclamation being made, that under pain of present death, no man should either approach nigh unto them, touch them, neither speak unto or comfort them: yet were they so mightily spoken unto, so comfortably taken by the hands, and so godly comforted, notwithstanding that fearful proclamation, and the present threatenings of the sheriff and sergeants, that the adversaries themselves were astonished. And since that time, the Bishop of London, either for fear or craft, carried seven more, or six at the least, forth of his Cole-house

to Fulham, the 12th day of this month, and condemning them there the 13th day, at one of the clock at afternoon, caused them to be carried the same time to Branford, beside Sion, where they were burned in post-haste the same night. This fact purchased him more hatred than any that he hath done of the common multitude. This I signify, that you, knowing our great dangers, may the rather move your godly company to pray more earnestly for us. It is constantly written by letters to London, that two towns, a little from Nottingham, about the 4th or 5th day of this month, were wonderfully beaten and shaken with thunder, and such storms; many were slain, and more were hurt, with great wonders, which I take to be a token of God's great displeasure for sin, who will make heaven and earth witness against wickedness. And yet men for the most part were never more careless, nor maliciously merry than they are now.

“God amend them!”

Thus far the letter relates to the recent martyrdoms and to public events, and must have been written with a bleeding heart. As one reads the autograph preserved in the Harleian Collection, with its quaint spelling, and not easily deciphered characters, the time-worn paper seems to glow with pictorial illustrations of the times, the circumstances, and the persons connected with that interesting document. The Smithfield fires blaze,—Bentham is seen comforting the sufferers,—the deep Amen reverberates,—and the cruelties of Fulham, and the holocaust at Brentford, pass in imagination before the reader.

But the letter refers to other matters. We get a

glimpse of the pastor of the Congregation, revolving certain cases of conscience which had sprung up among his members, and touching which he was anxious for the opinion of his brother divines.*

“I would gladly have your counsel and Mr. Martyr’s (Peter Martyr, of famous memory,) on these three questions, if you have leisure at any time to walk to Zurich:—First, Whether a young woman, married at nonage against her will, and so kept by force, be a lawful wife or not unto him with whom she is compelled to remain against her will. Secondly, Whether the professors of the gospel may prosecute their right and cause in any papistical court, or answer, being called thereunto, or take administration of goods in such courts: and thirdly, Whether the professors of the gospel, not communicating with Papists, may yet as well pay their tithes, and such duties to the Papists as tribute, custom, and subsidy to evil rulers and wicked magistrates.”

These are interesting references, throwing light upon domestic life, the concern then felt in the question of divorce, and the conscientious difficulties experienced by some of the Congregation in reference to existing institutions. It would appear that they thoroughly disliked the papistical courts, as well they might, and that some, like their Nonconformist successors in these days, had doubts as to the lawfulness of paying to a Church of which they disapproved.

“I trust,” proceeds the worthy pastor, “that I have answered some of my friends in these questions according to the truth, yet would I have your judgment,

* See Note [4].

both for greater confirmation and comfort unto them, and for my further instruction; also, if you can shortly send me word of these, you shall greatly comfort me, and help to confirm my friends in the right ways. I pray you commend me to all your company by name, most heartily, in our Lord Jesus Christ, who bless and keep you to the comfort of his congregation. Written at London, this 17th day of July."

When this letter was written, the days of Popish ascendancy were drawing to a close. The last fire in Smithfield had burnt out. The last in England kindled for the burning of a Protestant was shortly to blaze in the green dell by the walls of Canterbury;—a spot which no friend to religious liberty can visit without deep emotions of pain that ever such fires were lighted up; of gratitude, that there the smouldering embers were extinguished.

The reign of Mary was the midnight hour of religious persecution in England. Intolerance, without a gleam of charity, brooded over the land. The Church of Rome, through her willing slave, Queen Mary, and her official instruments the bishops, exercised her despotic sway, with a rigour before unknown in this country. It would certainly be unjust to ascribe the persecutions of that period to a principle of pure malevolence in the bosoms of the sovereign and her prelates. Nor must the origin of persecution be attributed to the Church of Rome, and the disgrace of practising it be laid solely to her charge; for it should be borne in mind that persecution is the sin of our fallen humanity, and had displayed its terrors ere the apostate branch of Christendom had any existence.

The practical development of its spirit has tarnished the history of other churches. But at the same time it would be as unfair to deny, that much personal feeling, and severity of the most aggravated kind in the treatment of their victims*—severity which even their despotic principles did not require, marked the conduct of the chief actors in the Marian persecutions, and that to Rome pre-eminently belongs the sin of intolerance, fostered by her pretended infallibility, her denial of salvation to heretics, and her claim to the subserviency of the civil powers as the ministers of her supreme will. With her, persecution has not been so much an accidental circumstance, as the natural expression of her spirit and the consistent working out of her principles. Other churches have fallen into the temptation of employing coercion in spite of their system; but hers has been a throne of iniquity, “which frameth mischief by a law.” The Protestant has fancied he *might* persecute,—the Papist was persuaded he *must*. The sword trembled in the hands of the one; it was grasped with terrible energy by the other. It is inconsistent for the Protestant to persecute; it is inconsistent for the Papist not to do so.

The course which was pursued in the reign of Mary was as impolitic as it was unjust and unchristian. As in most cases, persecution defeated its own ends. The cause sought to be crushed gathered strength. “A sort of instinctive reasoning told the people, what the learned on neither side had been able to discover, that the truth of a religion begins to be very suspicious when it stands in need of prisons and scaffolds to eke

* See Note [5].

out its evidences. Many are said to have become Protestants under Mary, who at her coming to the throne had retained the contrary persuasion." * Heavy was the yoke which crushed the neck of the people, and they looked up to Heaven, and cried for deliverance. When the death of Mary occurred, the people felt that a scourge was withdrawn. Never did a sovereign's removal excite less grief, and the successor's accession to the throne produce more joy. Mary died on the 17th November, 1558, and the Lady Elizabeth was proclaimed about eleven or twelve o'clock the same day. On the 28th November she left Hatfield House, attended by a thousand or more of lords, knights, gentlemen, ladies, and gentlewomen. The royal train came through Islington, and perhaps passed hard by the Saracen's Head, and other spots where stood friends of the martyred ones, pouring their blessings on the head of the Protestant queen. "All the streets she was to pass, even to the Tower, were new gravelled. And so she rid through Barbican, and Cripplegate, and along London Wall unto Bishopsgate, and thence up to Leaden Hall, and so through Grasschurch-street, and Fanchurch-street, turning down Mark-lane into Tower-street, and so on to the Tower. Before her rode many gentlemen, knights, and nobles; after them came the trumpeters, blowing; then all the heralds in array; my lord mayor, holding the queen's sceptre, riding with garter; my lord of Pembroke bare the queen's sword. Then came her grace on horseback, apparelled in purple velvet, with a scarf about her neck, the serjeants of arms being about her per-

* Hallam's Constitutional Hist. ii. 104, 105.

son. Next after her rode Sir Robert Dudley (afterwards Earl of Leicester), master of her horse, and so the guard with halberds. There was great shooting of guns,—the like was never heard before.”

How far men like our martyrs, and others of the Puritan cast, had reason to join in these rejoicings, we shall see in our next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE THREE MARTYRS.

“And when the wicked ones behold
Thy favourites walking in thy light,
Just as in fancied triumph bold,
They deemed them lost in deadly night;
Amazed they cry, ‘What spell is this,
Which turns their sufferings into bliss?’”

Christian Year.

“O QUEEN Mary and the Marian times! With how much greater tenderness and moderation is truth now contended for than falsehood was defended some time since! Our adversaries always acted with precipitancy, without precedent, without law; while we manage every thing with so much deliberation, and prudence, and wariness, and circumspection, as if God himself could scarce retain his authority without our ordinances and precautions; so that it is idly and scurrilously said, by way of joke, that as heretofore Christ was *cast out* by his enemies, so now he is *kept out* by his friends. This dilatoriness has grievously damped the spirit of our brethren, while it has wonderfully encouraged the rage and fury of our opponents.” * Such is the account of ecclesiastical affairs

* Zurich Letters, p. 17.

in England, which Jewel gave to his friend Martyr four months after the death of Mary. He had too much cause for such complaints. Elizabeth, who was so enthusiastically hailed by the Protestants on her accession to the throne, was exceedingly slow in favouring the cause with which they had identified her name. Indeed, her first acts left it almost doubtful which side in the grand religious controversy of the age she intended to support, as she peremptorily forbade all innovations in the existing order of things, and prohibited all public preaching for the present, both on the part of Protestants and Papists. This might well throw a damp on the spirits of men who had been labouring and suffering in the cause of Protestant truth, and who looked to Elizabeth's accession as the occasion of a perfect triumph. Most provoking to them was this pause in the conduct of the queen. No doubt her political prudence was much greater than her religious zeal; but when her well-known character is considered, it appears quite as probable that the course she thus pursued arose from her imperious temper, which loved to make her subjects wait with submission on her will, as that it arose from any merely prudential checks which she might put on her religious feelings.

One of the results of the Reformation, both on the Continent and in England, was that Protestant princes increased their powers and exalted their prerogatives; and the daughter of Henry VIII., who inherited his spirit along with his crown, was ready enough to avail herself of the circumstance. However tardy she might be in supporting the religious interests of the Refor-

mation, she was not slow in seizing upon the political advantages it offered. The Act of Supremacy was passed immediately upon the meeting of parliament; the power of the pope in England was abolished; the queen was constituted supreme governor in all cases, ecclesiastical and temporal; and power was vested in her majesty to appoint, under the great seal, the High Commission Court for the suppression of heresy. An act for the uniformity of common prayer, and service in the Church, and administration of the sacraments, speedily followed; by which the first Service-Book of Edward's reign, retaining the old Church festivals, the Popish habits, and other relics of the ancient system, was enforced as the standard of religious worship. The love which the queen had for a splendid ritual is notorious. She looked with favour on images, crucifixes, and lighted tapers; and deeply did the Reformers in general bewail the continuance of those symbols of Popery in the royal chapel, while some pointed to it as "the pattern and precedent of all superstition." *

Those who thus strongly reprobated the showy worship in the queen's chapel were the *Puritans*. They were men who had spent their time in exile on the Continent during the reign of Queen Mary, and had there, in the exercise of their conscientious judgment, arrived at simpler views of what Christian worship should be, than were held by others of their Protestant brethren. The Congregation in England, whose sufferings were related in the previous chapter, retained the use of King Edward's Service-Book; but this was laid aside by the Puritan party at Frankfort,

* See Hallam, i. 170.


and a form of worship was adopted similar to that which now obtains among Presbyterians and Congregationalists.* The opposition they met with from those who were attached to Edward's liturgy led to the well-known troubles at Frankfort,—the ejection of Knox, who was their minister,—the division of the Protestant congregation in the place, and the removal of the Puritan section of it to Geneva, where, without molestation, they were able to carry out their sentiments, and, as they say in the dedication of the Service-Book which they prepared for themselves, "to lay aside those human inventions which have done so much mischief, and to content themselves with that wisdom that is contained in God's book, which directs them to preach the word of God purely, to minister the sacraments sincerely, and use prayers and other orders thereby approved, to the edification of the Church and increase of God's glory."

With these views, they could not but be grievously scandalized at the queen's fondness for showy worship. They had at first no objection to the queen's supremacy, no scruples about the interference of the magistrate in religious matters; but they had strong objections to the cope, the surplice, and other accessories of Popish worship. These men were not, as is sometimes represented, a few weak fanatics, but a strong party, distinguished by their piety, talents, and learning, forming the very sinews of the reformed cause in England. So far were their objections to many of the relics of Popery from being singular, that several of the bishops themselves, who adopted

* See Note [6].

and enforced them, acknowledged that they did so of necessity, because they were imposed by the royal will, and that they had much rather have seen them altogether abolished. Jewel especially lamented the continuance of "the scenic apparatus of worship, as if the Christian religion could not exist without something tawdry," and blamed those who were seeking after a "*golden*," or, as he termed it, a *leaden* mediocrity; but he disavows all responsibility in the matter, for he observes, "*We* are not consulted." "There seems," he observes in another letter, "to be far too much prudence, too much mystery, in the management of these affairs, and God alone knows what will be the issue. The slow-paced horses retard the chariot." But though Jewel felt all this, and there were others in the high places of the Church who felt with him, they never earnestly sought the abolition of what they condemned. The best of them were slow-paced horses, and the slowness of their pace in most cases was the consequence of the strong curb and the tight rein with which the royal charioteer of the Church held in their movements.

The zealous Puritans contended for the complete removal of the surplice and other Papal relics. They were as anxious for uniformity as the rest of the ecclesiastics of that day, but it must be a uniformity purified from Popish corruptions. Their own refusal to wear the vestments, and conform to the appointed service, was in some cases tolerated for awhile, through the favour of their diocesans, and hence arose a diversity of order in the parish-church exceedingly distasteful to her majesty. In one place of worship might be



seen the priest in his surplice officiating at the altar, and administering unleavened cakes to the kneeling communicants; while in another might be found the presbyter in his Genevan cloak, beside a table placed in the body of the church, handing round common bread to the people who stood or sat. Such irregularity was highly offensive to the queen, and she resolved speedily to put an end to it. She was bent on uniformity, and the ecclesiastical authorities were commanded to enforce the law. Nonconformists must not be tolerated: her sovereign authority must not be resisted. Conscience! Her majesty did not seem to be aware there was one in existence, save her own.

The Puritans would now have been glad of their previous scanty toleration: and Humphrey, one of their most learned advocates, addressed the queen, urging that, if she would not yield to her subjects, yet she might of her clemency spare miserable men. "She would not rescind a public decree, yet she might relax and remit it. She could not take away a law, yet she might grant a toleration; that it was not fit to indulge some men's affections, yet it was most fit and equal not to force the minds of men."* But the trifling favour which he sought was refused. Nonconformists were deprived; eloquent tongues were silenced; brilliant luminaries were quenched. Humphrey and Sampson, two of the greatest ornaments the Church possessed, were treated with much severity: the former at length submitted; but the latter, retaining his scruples, lost his Church preferment, and, as a special favour, was allowed to be governor of a poor hospital.†

* Strype, Ann. ii. 143.

† See Note [7].

As the rigorous policy of the queen and the High Church party increased, the views of the Puritans became extended. In the beginning they had contended only for the removal of Popish vestments, and of various corruptions in the Church, and of many relics of Popery; but now they took the high ground, that the imposition of any human ceremonies was an invasion of the rights of conscience. At best they were but human appointments, and came within the Apostle's reproof,—"Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men, which all are to perish with the using? Touch not, taste not, handle not." Supposing the garments were indifferent (which they did not grant), yet they ought not to be imposed, because it was an infringement of the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.* It has often happened in the order of Divine providence, that the cause of truth is advanced by the opposition which it meets with. Its advocates, when enduring oppression, are led to inquire more carefully into the extent of the injustice which they suffer, and the grounds of those principles on which they act. Their views of truth expand on such an inquiry; and in the present instance, the Puritans, as they examined their reasons for peaceably resisting ecclesiastical tyranny, caught a glimpse of the grand principle, that man ought to have no dominion over the conscience of his brother man.

The voice of Scripture and reason, which the Puritans had on their side, their opponents could not an-

* Nele, i. 226.

swer: they had, however, power to silence it, and therefore they procured a decree of the Star Chamber forbidding that any person should publish a book against the queen's injunction, under pain of three months' imprisonment, and an interdiction of printing any more. All this could not fail to increase the dislike of scrupulous and conscientious minds to the Established Church altogether; and therefore many of the Puritans resolved to separate from its communion, and form a distinct church more in harmony with the principles and precedents of the New Testament. It was not, however, to be expected, from the temper of the queen, and some who were about her, that toleration, which had been refused to parties who had still remained in the Church, would be extended to them now they had left it. Bitter persecution followed them. They had to worship in woods and fields, and in the private houses of their friends; and one day, when a party of one hundred of them had met in Plummers' Hall for worship, under pretence of celebrating a wedding, their enemies broke into the room, took them in custody, and sent them to the Compter. "Thus began in England," says Sir James Mackintosh, "the persecution of Protestants by their fellow-dissenters from the Church of Rome." Yet this was scarcely the beginning of the career of intolerance in the bosom of Protestantism; it was rather a new manifestation of the spirit which had been growing ever since the accession of Elizabeth.

A bolder champion than the Puritans had had before, and one who contended for a far more extensive alteration in ecclesiastical affairs, arose in the person

of Thomas Cartwright, an advocate of strict Presbyterian government, and the emancipation of the Church from the dominion of the civil power. He saw that the Church was a spiritual community, that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, that the magistrate's authority over religious matters was an usurpation condemned by the New Testament; and this doctrine, so important to the interests of the Church and religious freedom, he unfolded with uncommon learning, argument, eloquence, and power. Yet, entangled by the prejudices of the age, he still regarded the civil magistrate as a fitting instrument for enforcing truth, but an instrument to be employed only at the Church's discretion. His vigorous mind clearly saw one side of the truth, but could not discern the other. The Church must be free from the trammels of the state,—here was a development of half the principles of religious liberty; the civil power must be equally free from the dictation of the Church, and must not be employed as an instrument for her purposes,—that was the other half, but it remained concealed. Thus, by the powerful pen of Cartwright, the form of religious liberty was but partially evoked, like the fabled horse of Neptune, under the trident of the god, struggling to free itself from the earth, in which it was still half buried. Another powerful advocate on the side of Puritanism was Edward Dering. "He was," says Fuller, "a pious man, and a painful preacher;" and certainly, if the Churchman's anecdote of the Puritan be true, he was as much distinguished by his boldness as by his piety and painstaking; for the historian informs us, that once, when

Dering was preaching before the queen, he told her, "In persecution under her sister Mary, her motto was '*tanquam ovis*,'—like a lamb; but now it might be '*tanquam indomita juvenca*,'—like an untamed heifer." It must be confessed that such a manner of speaking was not the most becoming; but it was not uncommon in those days for Church reformers, when addressing majesty, to indulge in a strain of expression as blunt as the style adopted by courtiers was flattering and servile. In his famous letter to Lord Burleigh, he insists, with much power and eloquence, on the difference between Episcopacy in the days of the Apostles and the Episcopacy of late times; and in some passages,* relative to the political influence possessed by the dignitaries of the English bench, he touches on a principle fatal to the employment of civil power in any way for the support of religion,—the very principle overlooked by Cartwright and others, and which, probably, the zealous pleader himself was not prepared to carry out to the full extent of its legitimate application.

The Puritans were men in earnest. Their reverence for the Scriptures was profound; their zeal in the maintenance of opinions derived from that book intense. Their views on some points might be narrow and one-sided, and their scruples in relation to some things might be carried to excess, but everlasting honour should be paid them for the honesty of their principles and the integrity of their consciences. "They ventured," to use their own language, "the loss of worldly commodities, rather than hazard that

* See Note [8].

which no earthly treasure can buy.”* Their Protestantism was of the most decided kind, resting not on the basis of expediency, but on a well-founded conviction of its Scriptural authority. With all their hearts they hated the system of Popery, and extended their dislike to its external badges and accompaniments. Being themselves released from the tyranny of the apostate church, they wished to abolish every memorial of enslavement to its superstitions. As emancipated captives, they looked with horror on the chains which they and their fathers had worn, and felt indignant at beholding these signs of former weakness treated as though they were symbols of beauty and strength. Men who have had no sympathy with their bold and ardent spirit, and their fearless love of what they felt to be right, have charged them with pride; but the truth is, that deep humility was a distinguishing element of their character. They humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God. They yielded up their reason and their conscience to his teaching. They felt they had no judgment of their own in matters upon which they saw, with the clearest light, that God had pronounced his judgment. Their submission to God prevented them from submitting to man. In matters of conscience they asserted their independence of the creature, because they cherished an unwavering reliance on their Creator. Men might charge them with restlessness, obstinacy, and pride, but the eye of God saw them prostrate in the dust before him.

“To say,” observes Dr. Arnold, “that the Puritans

* Strype, vol. i. p. ii. 168.

were wanting in humility, because they did not acquiesce in the state of things which they found around them, is a mere extravagance, arising out of a total misapprehension of the nature of humility and of the merits of the feeling of veneration. All earnestness and depth of character is incompatible with such notion of humility. A man deeply penetrated with some great truth, and compelled, as it were, to obey it, cannot listen to every one who may be indifferent to it, or opposed to it. There is a voice to which he already owes obedience, which he serves with the humblest devotion, which he worships with the most intense veneration. It is not that such feelings are dead in him, but that he has bestowed them on one object, and they are claimed for another. This charge of want of humility is one frequently brought by weaker and baser minds against the stronger and the nobler; not seldom by those who are at once arrogant and indifferent against those who are, in truth, as humble as they are zealous." These remarks are as just as they are able; and it is gratifying to remember that this noble vindication of the Puritans was uttered by the lips of the justly-revered Arnold, in his character of Professor of History, within the walls of that University where the men in question have been so often maligned.

Such were the men who had to drink so deeply of the cup of suffering, and whose unrighteous fate has left such a dark cloud over the so-called "golden days of good Queen Bess." The imagination of our youth has often been dazzled with the story of her fame abroad and her power at home. We have followed

with a kind of boyish glee her brilliant progresses from town to town, and from hall to hall; we have witnessed, with merry hearts, the gorgeous processions, the quaint pageants, the profuse entertainments, and the picturesque scenes at Kenilworth and elsewhere; but a larger acquaintance with her history has since thrown far different associations around the name of the Virgin Queen, and revealed to us many a noble-minded man, and ornament of her realm, arraigned before the High Court of Commission, and dragged to prison, because his conscience was not so supple as to bend under every touch of her ecclesiastical supremacy. We can now never forget that Elizabeth was a persecutor. The recollection haunts every brilliant scene in the annals of her reign, and throws its shadow over her most golden days. But the moral glory that encircles the sufferers for conscience sake is as bright as the disgrace which covers the oppressor is dark. The stern moral grandeur of the Puritans illuminates the sixteenth century with a solemn light, which excites awe, while it inspires admiration.

It must, however, be confessed that the Puritans of the Presbyterian class took a rather one-sided view of ecclesiastical questions. They were for releasing the Church from the dominion of the civil magistrate; but they did not see that there was any impropriety in employing the civil magistrate in supporting the dominion of the Church. They contended for freedom; but it was too much freedom for themselves alone. Not that they are to be charged with a selfish ambition; they were, no doubt, disinterested and conscien-

tions in the course they pursued, and thought they were acting according to the will of Christ, but they were unable to escape fully from the error of the times in which they lived.

But there were other men in England somewhat in advance of their brethren in their views on such subjects; and it is to the story of some of these individuals, as illustrative of their principles, sufferings, and character, that the observations already made in this chapter are intended to serve for an introduction.

Henry Barrowe was the son of a gentleman in Norfolk, and took the degree of B.A. in the College of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, in 1569. On leaving the University, he devoted himself to the study of the law, and became a member of Gray's Inn. His connexions and prospects in life appear to have been highly respectable, and for some time he was a frequenter of the Court of Elizabeth. In early life it is probable that he indulged in the follies, gaieties, and vices of his day; but he afterwards became a thoughtful and religious man, and devoted his mind to the study of ecclesiastical questions.

“ ‘Did any of you know Mr. Barrow?’ ask the young men in Governor Bradford’s Dialogues, ‘if we may be so bold as to ask; for we would willingly know what his life and conversation were, because some, we perceive, have him in precious esteem, and others can scarce name him without some note of obloquy and dislike.’ ‘We have not seen his person,’ reply the ancient men, ‘but some of us have been well acquainted with those that knew him familiarly, both before and after his conversion; and one of us hath

had conference with one that was his domestic servant, and tended upon him, both before and some while after the same. We have heard his conversion to be on this wise. Walking in London one Lord's-day, with one of his companions, he heard a preacher at his sermon very loud, as they passed by the church. Upon which, Mr. Barrow said unto his consort, 'Let us go in and hear what this man saith that is thus earnest.' 'Tush!' said the other, 'what, shall we go and hear a man talk!' But in he went, and sat down. And the minister was vehement in reprovng sin, and sharply applied the judgment of God against the same; and, it should seem, touched him to the quick in some things as he was guilty of, so as God set it home to his soul, and began to work his repentance and conversion thereby. For he was so stricken as he could not be quiet, until, by conference with godly men and further hearing of the word, with diligent reading and meditation, God brought peace to his soul and conscience, after much humiliation of heart and reformation of life; so he left the Court, and retired himself to a private life, sometime in the country, and sometime in the city, giving himself to study and reading of the Scripture, and other good works, very diligently. And being missed at Court by his consorts and acquaintance, it was quickly bruited abroad that Barrow was turned Puritan.'” *

An attentive examination of all that is contained in the New Testament respecting Church polity led him to see the spiritual character of the church of Christ;

* Bradford Dialogue, in Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, p. 433. Boston.

and his observation of the state of things then existing in the Establishment convinced him that it was far removed from the Scriptural model. His views of reformation were large and sweeping, and his enemies have endeavoured to blacken his name by charging him with selfishness in the opinions he entertained, representing him as a follower of Julian the apostate, bent on making the Church "a prey for bankrupts, cormorants, and suchlike atheists." * But how any man could be likely to benefit himself by taking up the cause of Nonconformists with so much zeal, when the prison and the gallows were staring him in the face, none of his virulent accusers have attempted to explain.

Between "nine and ten of the clock in the forenoon" on Lord's-day, the 19th of November, 1586, he tells us that he went to the Clink, to visit some brethren who were there imprisoned for their Nonconformist principles. He had not been there a quarter of an hour, when he was himself arrested, and locked up in prison. He demanded of the officer a sight of the warrant by which he acted. The man promised to show it; and at one o'clock returned with two pursuivants, who put their prisoner into a boat, and took him up the Thames to Lambeth. As they were gliding on the water, one of the pursuivants drew out of his bosom a letter from Lambeth, saying how long he had sought to apprehend poor Barrowe. In reply to which Barrowe observes, "I told him his pains deserved thanks neither at God's hand nor mine." On the afternoon of that Sabbath, when it might have been supposed that Whit-

* Strype's Life of Whitgift, 415.

gift, Bishop of London, would have found some holier employment, Barrowe was brought into the presence-chamber, where his lordship sat in state, and forthwith proceeded to examine him. The plan pursued in this Commission Court was not to try the accused on evidence, but to administer what was called the *ex-officio* oath, and then, by a train of inquisitorial questions, to endeavour to make the individual criminate himself,—a precious piece of criminal jurisprudence, borrowed from the Church of Rome, and sanctified by the proceedings of Bonner and others under Queen Mary. Barrowe sturdily refused to be sworn, and gave the Bishop several very short and tart replies; upon which he was committed to the Gate-house, and on the 27th November following was brought before the High Commissioners at Lambeth, where, he informs us, “he found a goodly synod of bishops, deans, and civilians, beside such an appearance of well-fed silken priests as might have beseemed the Vatican.” Again he refused to swear; again he was committed. On the 24th March he was examined on his affirmation without oath. It appears, from his replies, that he went further than the Puritans in his ecclesiastical views. He strongly objected to forms of prayer, especially the Common Prayer-Book; to the Sacraments, as administered in the Church of England; to the ecclesiastical laws and canons; to the idea that the Establishment was a true Church; to the extent of the Queen’s ecclesiastical supremacy; and to the abolition of the judicial law of Moses. He denied that it was lawful for any private person to intermeddle with the prince’s office, and to reform the state without his good liking

and licence; but he virtually admitted the right of private Christians to share in the regulation of ecclesiastical matters, for he expressly contended that the holy government of Christ's church belongeth not to the profane or unbelieving, neither can it, without manifest sacrilege, be set over these parishes as they now stand in confusion; no difference being made between the faithful and unbelieving, all being indifferently received into the body of the Church; but over every particular congregation of Christ there ought to be an eldership, and every such congregation ought to their uttermost power to endeavour thereunto.* This important view of a Church, as a spiritual community distinct from the civil, he fully developes in his subsequent writings, in which he exposes the fallacy of the notion that a whole kingdom, composed of all descriptions of persons, can be regarded as a Church,—that character and title, in his estimation, belonging of right only to separate congregations of believers, who, with their ministers, popularly elected, form a complete spiritual organization according to the will of Christ, and have power to manage their affairs without foreign control.† Thus the grand principle of Congregational Dissenters was brought out in distinction from the views of Presbyterian Christians. Presbyterian Puritanism had looked at the formalism of the Church, and at the despotic authority of bishops, and had taken its stand upon the point of opposition to these corruptions. The Puritanism of Independency went deeper, and saw the root of all ecclesiastical evils

* Examination, &c. Harleian Miscell. ii. 21.

† Hanbury's Memorial, i. 54, 57.

in a departure from the Christian Congregationalism of the first century. Barrowe was the first who in modern times clearly exhibited the character of Scriptural Independency.*

The doctrine stated by him involved the inference, that there ought to be a perfect separation between the Church and the State, and that religion should be left as a voluntary duty, with no other sanctions than those which are of the same spiritual nature with itself. But it would be saying too much, to affirm that Barrowe and his brethren distinctly apprehended this. Gleams of such a truth might, and no doubt did, visit their minds; but they failed to develop it, and allowed themselves to be entangled in inconsistencies, at which, however, no one acquainted with the prevalent notions of the times will wonder. "We acknowledge," said Barrowe, "that the prince ought to *compel* all his subjects to the hearing of *God's word*, in the public exercises of the Church; yet," he adds, "cannot the prince compel any to be a member of the Church." The limit here assigned to the power of compulsion in religious matters is very curious, and shows how large a portion of the truth in relation to this subject was discerned by this remarkable man. That he did not see the entire bearings of his own principle is only a fact like what has occurred in a thousand instances of men who have struck out new views; and, perhaps, it has on the whole been well for the interests of truth that all the consequences of its assertion have not been at first fully apprehended, for had they been so, it is more than possible that prejudice or timidity might

* See Note [9].

have strangled it in the birth. It is to be further confessed, in reference to Barrowe's controversy with the Church, that he often displayed a spirit of violence. That spirit was too common with the keen advocates of either side of the question at that time, but it was less reprehensible in him than in his opponents, because he had to contend not only with their arguments, but with their weapons of physical force, and was goaded on without mercy by the prison and the gibbet; yet, whatever allowance we may make for persons, we must not lose sight of the Christian principle as to the method of carrying on our warfare in the cause of truth,—we must not forget that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

Barrowe's principles found many adherents: churches were gathered on the Congregational model; and so many particulars have been preserved respecting the origin of one of them in the city of London, that a tolerably correct idea of the interesting scene may be formed by a slight effort of the imagination.

It was in the year 1592 that certain grave-looking personages might have been seen turning down Nicholas-lane from Lombard-street, of famous memory, and entering, in little groups, or one by one, the house of Mr. Fox, who kept an ordinary in a court opening into the said lane. There was an air of suspicious caution about these persons as they approached the door—as of men who felt that spies were on the look-out to detect their proceedings. A wary door-keeper let in the visitors, carefully observing each individual, lest some one should enter who

came to spy out "the liberty which they had in Christ Jesus, and bring them into bondage." When a goodly party had assembled in the somewhat gloomy-looking wainscoted parlour, including Mr. Francis Johnson, Mr. Greenwood, Mr. Bowman, Mr. Lee, Mr. Studley, and Kinaston,—names unknown to worldly fame, but celebrated, many now will think, in a more noble record than any earthly one,—the first of these worthies rose, and in a strain of calm and earnest devotion, though in a manner, perhaps, rather tedious to modern ears, prayed for about half an hour, committing to the care of Heaven the little flock then gathered into the Saviour's fold, and also specially remembering their enemies, beseeching of God to turn their hearts. Opening the Genevan Bible that lay on the long oaken table, at the end of which he stood, he discoursed to the attentive assembly, much to their edification, for the space of an hour, and then invited any of the brethren who chose to make their comments on the subject he had discussed. The subject of his discourse would be the constitution of a Christian Church according to the principles which have been already noticed as taught by Mr. Barrowe. To form such a Church; to covenant together to walk in the way of the Lord, according to the warrant of His word; to give to each other the right hand of Christian fellowship, with their hearts in it, is the purpose for which this assembly has been convened. As many as seven persons, among whom were the children of Mr. Studley and Mr. Lee, without godfathers or godmothers, were solemnly baptized by effusion; no other ceremony being used than the utterance of the in-

spired formulary. Five white loaves were then set on the table, with a plain-looking cup of wine; and Mr. Johnson, whom the Church now recognised as their pastor,* proceeded to bless the bread and wine by prayer, and then to administer them to Mr. Bowman and Mr. Lee, the deacons, who handed them to the rest of the company. They sang a hymn, made a collection for the poor, and were dismissed, with a caution from their pastor, "to go home severally, lest the next meeting they should be interrupted by those which are of the opinion of the wicked."† Such simplicity, very distasteful to many in the present day, was still more repulsive to multitudes in an age when the love of splendour and ceremony in all things, civil and religious, was a predominant passion. One can hardly imagine how novel and strange the simple worship of these primitive Independents must have appeared, at a time when shows and pageants gave a tone to the prevailing taste, and an imposing ceremonial in religion was loved and cherished. But no doubt some readers who may honour this volume with their notice, will discern a more touching beauty in this specimen of Christian Congregational worship, and certainly a much stronger resemblance to the Passover scene in the Upper Room at Jerusalem, than could be found in the administration of the sacrament in St. Paul's cathedral of that day,—to say nothing of the pompous mass in former times celebrated within those venerable walls.

* See Note [10].

† See Examination of D. Buck, in Strype's Annals, iv. 243, and the Brownist's Synagogue, quoted in Hanbury's Memorial, i. 86.

Our Nonconformist fathers met and separated in safety on the occasion just described; but there were liars in wait, who not long after discovered their proceedings. Besides Mr. Fox's ordinary, houses in Aldgate and Smithfield are mentioned; but above all other places of meeting, the mind lingers with interest over the quiet close, not far from the village of Islington, where they were wont to meet early in the morning on the summer Sabbaths, the identical spot where the congregation in Mary's time used to assemble, and where the occurrence related in the last chapter took place. As the dew sparkled on the grass, and the birds twittered on the hedges, and the sun threw his brightness over the far-spreading landscape, the scene would wear, in the eyes of these confessors, a robe of holier beauty, as they thought of their martyred fathers, who had knelt on the same greensward, and studied their Bible under the shadow of the same old trees. They viewed that congregation some thirty years before, as related to their own by certain common principles and usages; they often alluded to it in their examinations and writings, and no doubt treasured up many a holy legend of heroism and suffering, which they had heard from eye-witnesses in their younger days, and which they now loved to relate to their children as they sat in the winter evenings round their spacious old English hearths. One Sunday morning they were tracked by their enemies to the close at Islington, where fifty-six were apprehended, and sent two by two to the gaols in London, which afterwards received inmates from other places where the Congregation had been found wor-

shipping. Many persons of the same principles had been committed to prison before, and a considerable multitude might have been numbered of those who in this way suffered for their nonconformity.

"Some of us," said they, in their petition to the Council, "have now been more than five years in prison; yea, four of these five years in close prison, with miserable usage, as Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood at this present in the Fleet. Others they have cast into their limbo at Newgate, laden with as many irons as they could bear: others into the dangerous and loathsome gaol, among the most facinorous and vile persons, where it is lamentable to relate how many of these innocents have perished within these five years, and of these some aged widows, aged men, and young maidens; where so many as the infection hath spared still lie in woful distress, like to follow their fellows if speedy redress be not had. Others of us have been grievously beaten with cudgels in the prisons, as at Bridewell, and cast into a place called Little-ease there, for refusing to come to their chapel service; in which prison they and others of us not long after ended their lives. Their manner of pursuing and apprehending us is with no less violence and outrage. Their pursuivants, with assistants, break into our houses at all hours of the night. There they break up, ransack, rifle, and make havock at their pleasure, under pretence of searching for seditious and unlawful books. The husbands in the deep of the night they have plucked out of their beds from their wives, and haled them unjustly to prison."

"We profess," they add in another document, "the

same faith and truth of the gospel, which her Majesty and your honours, the whole land, and all the reformed Churches under heaven this day do hold and maintain; we go beyond them, being our only fault, even in the judgments of our tyrannical and most savage enemies, in the detestation of all Popery, that most fearful anti-Christian religion, and draw nearer in some points by our practice unto Christ's holy order and institutions. We have as good warrant to reject the ordinances of Antichrist, and labour for the recovery of Christ's holy ordinances, as our fathers in Queen Mary's days. Are we malefactors? Are we any more undutiful to our prince? Maintain we any errors? Let us then be judicially convicted thereof, and delivered to the civil authority. We crave for all of us but liberty either to die openly, or to live openly in the land of our nativity." The latter request was denied to all; the former granted to some.

On the 21st March, 1593, Barrowe, Greenwood, and others, were indicted at the Old Bailey upon the statute of 23 Elizabeth, for writing and publishing sundry seditious books and pamphlets tending to the slander of the Queen's government; whereas the book complained of in their trial did not at all relate to the Queen or her government, but treated of religious questions, and was entitled "A Brief Dissection of the False Church."* The courage with which conscious integrity filled their hearts greatly annoyed their enemies, and they bitterly complain "that none of

* The examinations of Barrowe, Greenwood, and the rest, are preserved in the Egerton Papers, Camden Society's publications, p. 167, from which it appears that all the specific accusations against them related simply to their religious opinions.

them showed any token of recognition of their offences, and prayer of mercy for the same."* Barrowe and Greenwood were to suffer as examples, and the 24th of March was fixed for their execution. Early in the morning they were brought out of their dungeon; their irons were smitten off, but just as they were about being bound to the cart which was to convey them to Tyburn, a reprieve arrived. The hope of life was re-awakened in minds fully prepared for death, but the reprieve had come only that the sufferings of the martyrs might be prolonged by attempts to provoke a conference, and to persuade them to recant. They were firm to their principles, and therefore their doom was sealed.

On the last day of March, 1593, very early in the morning, as spring was breathing its fresh breezes about the environs of London, the mournful procession of the death-cart, with the condemned and the attendant officers, passed under the archway of Newgate, and slowly ascended Holborn-hill. It was not studded with buildings and crowded with bustle as it is at the present day, but from the windows in the picturesque gables which then stood beside the road there were not a few who looked on the sad procession, and pitied the fate of men so unjustly treated. As the train moved along, persons came out and joined it, to witness the end, if not to sympathize in the sufferings of the martyr pair. They enter St. Giles-in-the-Fields, where the fresh grass spring-

* An exception was made on behalf of Scipio Bellet, who recanted, and expressed great sorrow for what he had done.—*Strype's Whitgift*, 414.

ing up after the winter snows, and the budding leaves of the hedgerows, symbols of life and mementos of cheerful youth, bringing joy to the hearts of multitudes, are rather calculated to fill with melancholy feelings the breasts of the two condemned, were it not that Christian hope tells them of a rich and everlasting spring-time in the paradise of God, soon to open on their eyes. They reach the gallows-tree at Tyburn, where the vilest malefactors had paid the penalty of their offences, and patiently do they undergo, at the hands of the common hangman, the horrid ceremony of adjusting the ropes to their necks. A large crowd has by this time gathered, notwithstanding the precautions to keep the tragedy as secret as possible. They are permitted, according to the common custom in such cases, to speak for a few moments, when they express their loyalty to the Queen, their submission to the civil government, and their sorrow for any hasty irreverent expressions which in the heat of controversy may have escaped their lips. They declare their continued faith in the doctrines for which they are about to suffer, and entreat the people around them to embrace those principles only as they appear to be the teaching of the word of God. They then offer a prayer for her Majesty, the magistrates, and the people, not forgetting their bitterest enemies. A breathless silence pervades the crowd, as every eye is fixed on the men standing beneath the fearful beam, when a faint buzz is heard in the distance, a commotion follows on the outskirts of the dense mass, and a messenger, hurrying his way through the opening ranks, speedily approaches the place of death. The

execution is stayed,—he has brought a reprieve; the men, though ready to die, feel the life-blood, which had begun already to curdle in their veins, throbbing afresh. They are grateful for the royal mercy, and bless the name of Elizabeth; the multitude partake in the sentiment, and rend the air with acclamations. They return through the green fields and down Holborn-hill, accompanied by the people, whose rejoicings on their behalf awaken a sympathetic response on the part of others who line the streets and lanes to witness this strange spectacle of men brought back from the gates of the grave. The sight harmonizes with the season, and the vernal sun seems to rejoice as he sheds his light on the returning procession. Barrowe, on re-entering his prison, sits down to write to a distinguished relative, describes the scene which has just taken place, and with earnestness implores her ladyship not to let any impediments hinder her from speaking to the Queen on his behalf before she goes out of the city, lest he perish in her absence. Thus twice had these men passed through the bitterness of death without dying, and now rejoice, though with some clouds of apprehension, in the hope of brighter earthly scenes. But there is no hope for them on this side the grave. The reprieve of to-day, like the former one, is an utter delusion. It is a new method of ingenious torture. Innocent as they are, they must perish. The next morning they are dragged from their cells a third time, to gaze again on the apparatus of death with which they have become now so strangely familiar, to be led forth to Tyburn, but on this occasion to return no more.

4

It would seem that Elizabeth lived to repent of this as well as of some other of her acts. "It is reported that she asked the learned Dr. Reynolds what he then thought of those two men, Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood. He answered her Majesty that it could not avail anything to show his judgment concerning them, seeing they were put to death. And being loth to speak his mind further, her Majesty charged him upon his allegiance to speak; whereupon he answered, that he was persuaded if they had lived they would have been two as worthy instruments for the Church of God as have been raised up in this age. Her Majesty sighed, and said no more; but, after riding to a park near the place where they suffered death, called again to mind their suffering of death, and demanded of the Earl of Cumberland, who was present when they suffered, what end they made. 'A very godly end, and prayed for your Majesty and the state.'"

John Penry was another of the victims of intolerance. He came up from Wales, and studied both at Cambridge and Oxford, securing for himself the reputation of superior scholarship, and preaching with much popular applause in the pulpits of the University and among his native mountains. He cast in his lot among the Nonconformists, and his name occurs in connexion with the London Congregation already noticed. He was charged with being concerned in the authorship of certain satirical pamphlets against the Bishops, and to escape apprehension retired to Scotland, whence he returned to London, and was seized soon after the execution of Barrowe and Greenwood. He was indicted for seditious words and

rumours against the Queen, tending to the stirring up of rebellion among her subjects. Some papers found in his study, and never intended for publication, containing observations on his Scotch visit, and a report of certain objections made by the people in those parts against her Majesty, but breathing, where his own sentiments were expressed, a spirit of loyalty, were produced against him, and he was doomed to follow his two brethren to an ignominious death. From his cell he wrote to "the distressed faithful Congregation of Christ in London, and all the members thereof, whether in bonds or at liberty." "Beloved," he says, "I thank my God, I am not only ready to be bound and banished, but even to die in this cause by his strength. Yea, my brethren, I greatly long, in regard of myself, to be dissolved, and to live in the blessed kingdom of heaven with Jesus Christ and his angels,—with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Jeremy, Daniel, Paul the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and the rest of the holy saints, both men and women, with the glorious kings, prophets, and martyrs and witnesses of Jesus Christ, that have been from the beginning of the world, with my two dear brethren, Mr. Henry Barrowe and Mr. John Greenwood, which have last of all yielded their blood for this precious testimony, confessing unto you, my brethren and sisters, that if I might live on the earth the days of Methuselah twice told, and that in no less comfort than Peter, James, and John were in the Mount, and after this life might be sure of the kingdom of heaven, that yet to gain all this I durst not go from the former testimony. Let not those of you,"

adds this thoughtful and benevolent man, "that have either stocks in your hands, or some likely hoards to live by, dispose of yourselves where it may be most commodious for your outward estate, and in the mean time suffer the poor ones that have no such means either to bear the whole work upon their weak shoulders, or to end their days in sorrow and mourning, for want of outward and inward comforts in the land of strangers, for the Lord will be an avenger of all such dealings. But consult with the whole Church, yea, with the brethren of other places, how the Church may be kept together, and built whithersoever they go. And here I humbly beseech you, not in any outward regard, as I shall answer before my God, that you would take my poor and desolate widow, and my fatherless and friendless orphans, with you into exile whithersoever you go, and you shall find, I doubt not, that the blessed promises of my God, made unto me and mine, will accompany them, and even the whole Church, for their sakes. And be every way comfortable unto the sister and wife of the dead,—I mean my beloved Mr. Barrowe and Mr. Greenwood, whom I most heartily salute, and desire much to be comforted in their God, who, by his blessing from above, will countervail unto them the want of so notable a brother and a husband." These are but fragments of an epistle abounding in the eloquence of nature, heightened by the spirit of Christianity. The warrant for Penry's execution was issued on the 29th of May. The prisoner was informed at noon while at dinner that he must die before night; and ere sunset on that memorable May evening this learned, zealous, and amiable

man, with haste and secrecy, was hanged upon the gallows-tree at St. Thomas Watering, Southwark, after the manner of a felon.*

There had now been enough of this kind of work; not, indeed, to crush Nonconformity, which the rulers hoped would be the case, but to arouse public sympathy in its favour; and therefore from this time the plan of gibbeting Dissenters ceased.

Cowper laments the neglect with which Englishmen have treated the memory of their Protestant martyrs:—

“Their ashes flew—
No marble tells us whither,—with their names
No hard embalms and sanctifies his song,—
And history, so warm on other themes,
Is cold on this.”

This language, which is hardly just in reference to some of the sufferers in Mary's reign, is applicable in the severest truth to the men whose fate has been just reviewed. Like the once ignominious but now honoured cross, the stake of Smithfield has gathered round it some rays of glory: but the gibbet, on which Penry and others died as nobly as Latimer or Ridley did amidst the flames, is still covered with dishonour, and is left, in the view of many, without a redeeming association. The men were hanged as troublers of the Church and State: so, for the most part, their history is read, and Strype and others of the same class have not even a tear of sympathy for these imagined culprits. These men died as martyrs for truth,—truth of deep import, and to their thoughtful minds

* See Note [11].

involving consequences of mighty interest to the cause of spiritual religion,—so another race of historical students, now on the increase, more correctly read their story. Why should not Penry and his martyred compeers be put into the same list with our Latimers and our Cyprians? What matters it whether the sufferer died on a gallows, or at the stake, or under the headsman's sword? And is it enough to divorce their names, that one died for the truth of his religion in opposition to the falsehoods of Paganism,—another for the reasonableness of his religion in opposition to the absurd mysteries of Popery,—and a third for the spirituality of his religion in opposition to the formalism and secularity of the age? I believe all these sufferers have long since clasped hands before the throne of God. With kindred feelings, I first stand and gaze on the field near Carthage, where amidst a vast concourse of people, some climbing up the trees, the African Bishop bows his head and dies. I then visit the spot in Oxford, near Balliol College, where the Protestant prelates suffered amidst the taunts of their enemies and the sympathy of their friends,—poor Cranmer from his prison-window watching them to the stake. And, finally, I walk through St. Giles-in-the-Fields, to gaze on the Nonconformist martyrs as they reach Tyburn; and in these and suchlike men, I recognise true spiritual heroes, supported in their conflict by the Saviour's presence, and exhibiting the noblest developments of the moral sublime that earth can offer, or Heaven look down upon.

"When persecution's torrent blaze
Wraps the unshrinking martyr's head,
When fade all earthly flowers and bays,
When summer friends are gone and fled,
Is he alone in that dark hour,
Who owns the Lord of love and power?

"Or waves there not around his brow
A wand no human arm can wield,
Fraught with a spell no angels know,
His steps to guide, his soul to shield?
Thou, Saviour, art his charmed bower,
His magic ring, his rock, his tower."

Thus do I feel, and thus others have felt, as the eye now gazes with tears, or turns away with terror, while the glittering sword, and the blazing brand, and the fatal rope, dismisses the patient glorified victim to yonder temple, where his spirit joins the band of souls already beneath the altar.

CHAPTER III.

PILGRIM FATHERS.

"I WILL make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land, or else worse," was the exclamation of King James respecting the Puritans at the mock conference held in the old withdrawing-room of Hampton Court, that monument of Wolsey's pride and fall, of ecclesiastical despotism and humiliation. "I will harry them out of the land," was the merciful resolve of that orthodox prince, before whom, at the close of the second day's conference, Bancroft fell upon his knees, and said, "I protest, my heart melteth for joy, that Almighty God, of his singular mercy, has given us such a king as since Christ's time has not been." "James," adds Daniel Neal, somewhat drily, "was as good as his word." Many a conscientious Puritan was driven from the shores of his fatherland to seek an asylum in a foreign country, and thus England lost some of her richest jewels, if citizens of integrity and uprightness be a nation's wealth; and some of her best royal blood, if there be truth in the lines of one of the bards of James's native land,—

"The honest man, tho' e'er sœ poor,
Is king of men for a' that."

The Low Countries, as to religious liberty far surpassing the rest of Europe, afforded cities of refuge for the victims of persecution. The fact was then thrown in the teeth of Holland as a reproach; and it formed the spice of many a piece of wit at the Dutchmen's expense, but their conduct redounded to their everlasting honour. Many of the Puritans of the Presbyterian school sought a home in Holland, and formed churches there upon their own principles: and the peculiar pressure of the persecuting times on the men who held the system of Independency, might well constrain them to seek a resting-place in the same free land.

There was a little flock of persecuted ones who dwelt in that part of England where Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire border on each other. They had a grave and reverend preacher, Mr. Richard Clifton, who had been an instrument in the conversion of many; and among their number there was "that famous and worthy man, Mr. John Robinson, and also Mr. William Brewster, a reverend man, who was afterwards chosen an elder of the Church."* Robinson, whose intimate connexion with the Pilgrim Fathers will bring him prominently before us in this chapter, had been a clergyman in the Church of England, and had held a benefice near Yarmouth, in Norfolk, where he was often molested by the Bishop's officers, while his friends were almost ruined in the ecclesiastical courts; and as to Brewster, it may be

* Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 453. Robinson was born in 1573, but the place of his birth is unknown. He was probably educated in the University of Cambridge.

remarked that he had held offices of trust under Secretary Davison, the unfortunate person whom Elizabeth made a scapegoat in the melancholy affair of Mary Queen of Scots. He had retired into the country, where he lived respected, and had been by degrees led to espouse the principles of Independency, upon which he opened his house as a place of worship for the persons we have mentioned. But they felt themselves in peril from their Argus-eyed persecutors, and resolved to seek religious freedom under the government of Holland.

On one occasion, a company of these freedom-seeking exiles appointed as a place of rendezvous the town of Boston, in Lincolnshire, at which port they were to embark in a vessel they had hired for the purpose. The party arrived, but the ship did not appear. Day after day they waited in the place with anxious hearts, till at length news reached them that the ark of refuge they were longing for would be ready to take them away at the appointed time at night for greater safety. They and their goods were taken on board, when, to their unutterable surprise and agony, they found themselves betrayed by the unprincipled captain into the hands of their enemies, who entered the vessel, took them prisoners, rifled them of their money, searched their persons, treated the women with the rudest indelicacy, and then led the whole party in triumph through the streets of Boston, for a gazing-stock and a reproach. Brought before the magistrates, these innocent victims of intolerance found favour in their sight, though they were put in ward; but as soon as an order of council could be obtained,

the greater part were dismissed: seven of these persons, however, among whom was Brewster, were cruelly detained in prison till the next assizes.

This happened in 1607; in the spring of the following year some of the same parties, in connexion with others like minded, made a further attempt to escape from oppression in their native land. But this time they would not trust an Englishman. They met with a Dutch captain at Hull, who had a ship of his own, and they arranged with him for their passage. A solitary part of the beach, between Grimsby and Hull, far away from any town, was selected as the place of embarkation. The women and children, it was arranged, should go thither by sea, in a small vessel; the men by land. The former reached their destination the day before the Dutch ship arrived, and put into a little creek, where lying at low water they found protection from the ocean's swell, and some relief from their distressing sea-sickness. In that condition they spent the night. How comfortless! the loud winds sweeping over them, the hollow moaning of the waves at the midnight hour, (for the sea was rough,) deepening the melancholy feelings that agitated their breasts. The next morning the longed-for ship arrived. Gladly was it welcomed by the women and children in their little bark, and by the fathers and husbands, too, who had been walking up and down the shore with deep anxiety. A boat was sent off from the ship, and it was thought best to take some of the men on board first. A party of them were conveyed there accordingly, and the boat returned to receive another load, when, to the terror of all present, a number of persons,

some on horse, some on foot, armed with guns and other weapons, were seen approaching the spot, evidently for the purpose of arresting the fugitives. The Dutch captain was alarmed, swore by the sacrament he would not stay, and spreading his sails to a favourable wind, which had risen, weighed anchor, and was soon out of sight. With what aching hearts did the poor exiles in the vessel look towards the receding shores, to their disconsolate companions, and their precious wives and children, who stood there "crying for fear and quaking with cold!" The men had no property on board, not even a change of raiment, and scarcely a penny in their pockets; but the loss of their possessions was nothing to the cruel stroke which severed them from those they best loved on earth. As the wide field of waters spreads between these separated ones, we hardly know which most to pity, those poor widows, who look with agony on their little children, playing about the sands, chasing the tide, and gathering up the pebbles, unconscious of their evil lot; and those elder orphans, able to understand the woe which has come over them, and whose cries, together with their mothers', mingle with the deep roar of the breakers; or those men on board, who weep and pray, and would give the world to be on land again, to share the destiny of the sufferers they are leaving behind. On the approach of the officers, some of the men on shore escaped, others remained to assist the women. The whole party was apprehended, and conveyed from constable to constable, till their persecutors were weary with the trouble of so large a number of captives, and permitted them to go their way. As to

those who were in the Dutch vessel, the elements warred against them. A fearful storm drove them on the coast of Norway; "nor sun, nor moon, nor stars for many days appeared." The mariners despaired of life, and once gave up all for lost, thinking the ship had foundered. "But when," says one who was on board, "man's hope and help wholly failed, the Lord's power and mercy appeared for their recovery, for the ship rose again, and gave the mariners courage again to manage her; and, if modesty would suffer me, I might declare with what fervent prayers they cried unto the Lord in this great distress, especially some of them, even without any great distraction. When the waters ran into their very ears and mouths, and the mariners cried out, 'We sink! we sink!' they cried, if not with miraculous, yet with a great height of divine faith, 'Yet, Lord, thou canst save!' And He who holds the winds in his fist and the waters in the hollow of his hands did hear and save them.

"In the end," it is added, "notwithstanding all these storms of opposition, they all got over at length, some at one time, and some at another, and met together again, according to their desires, with no small rejoicing." *

Every one who has visited a foreign country must remember the peculiar feelings he experienced when he first stepped upon its shores. The novelty of the scene, the architecture of the dwellings and churches, the costume, manners, and language of the people, and a number of little things, in perfect contrast with what he has been accustomed to witness at home, excite a

* Young's Chronicles, p. 29.

state of mind which can be more easily recollected than described. But it makes a wide difference whether the stranger be a tourist in quest of recreation, or an exile in search of a home. The feeling of strangeness, which in the one case becomes the basis of pleasurable emotions, in the other case spreads coldly over the heart. And if there be no prospect of returning back to scenes endeared by the associations of childhood, and by still more sacred attachments,—if the absence, in all probability, be for life, then is the sadness increased a thousandfold; and He who knows what is in man, and watches every chord of human feeling as it vibrates, has noted down this sorrow with a touching sympathy in those beautiful words,—“Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.”* It was with such feelings that the English refugees landed on the shores of Holland. “They heard,” says Bradford in his narrative, “a strange and uncouth language, and beheld the different manners and customs of the people, with their strange fashions and attires, all so differing from that of their plain country villages wherein they were bred and born, and had so long lived, as it seemed they were come into a new world.”† Amsterdam was the place to which, in the first instance, they looked as their future home. Since the Pacification of Ghent in 1578, this remarkable city had amazingly advanced in mercantile importance, and was rising to that pre-eminence among the cities of the Low Countries, which in the middle ages had distinguished Antwerp. Two

* Jer. xxii. 10.

† Young’s Chronicles, p. 33.

centuries have made but little difference in Amsterdam; and the reader who has seen its canals covered with vessels of various sizes, its streets adorned with long rows of trees, the picturesque gables of its houses, and its busy crowds, with their wooden shoes, can easily picture to himself the novel scene that spread before the eyes of these pious exiles as they entered within that fine old city. But as they mused on what they saw, they must have gathered a lesson suited to their situation, and full of encouragement. Their own energy and perseverance, under the blessing of God, formed their only means of subsistence; and what those qualities of character could do was demonstrated in the growing power and opulence of that remarkable city. It was a spot literally won from the ocean by human toil, and secured by an immense dam from inundation. Its houses were built on a morass, yet they rested on a firm base, constructed of huge piles, — a circumstance which gave rise to the saying of Erasmus, that multitudes of his countrymen were like birds, living on the top of trees. Every object the strangers saw, as they walked about the streets of their new home, seemed to bear the motto, "Labor omnia vincit."

Amsterdam, however, was not altogether a city of strangers. There were some there already, who, like themselves, had left the shores of England for conscience sake. Some Puritans, among whom was the celebrated Dr. Ames, had at an early period established themselves in the city; and now there had been for several years in the same place a Congregational Church. Indeed, it was a portion of the

very community whose formation in St. Nicholas-lane we described in a former chapter. Not long after that interesting circumstance, such of the members as could leave their native land were glad to escape to Holland, under the care of Mr. Johnson their pastor, and Mr. Ainsworth their teacher. These men were now presiding over the flock at Amsterdam. They, particularly the latter, were men of talent and learning; but unhappily discords afterwards arose between them, which led to fierce controversy. Johnson was a man of ardent temperament and strict principles, and gave great offence by excommunicating from the Church his own brother and father. The disturbance in the Church was increased by some frivolous complaints, made by certain members, respecting Mrs. Johnson's dress, who, being a person of some wealth, was rather smarter than her grave sisters, wearing, it is said, "cork shoes," and "whalebone in the bodice and sleeves of her gown." Ainsworth is described as a man of "meek spirit and calm temper, void of passion, and not easily provoked:" yet the misunderstanding between him and his more excitable colleague prevailed to such an extent, that they separated from each other, and the Church divided. This afforded no small occasion of triumph to the opponents of their principles; yet with no good reason, for every one must see that contention is the fruit of our fallen nature,—that no system of discipline had ever proved sufficient to prevent the outbursts of excited passions,—and that every section of Christendom, whatever may be its form of government, has in its turn been troubled with the storms of strife.

Before these unhappy discussions broke out, the Church at Amsterdam was in great prosperity. With feelings of deep veneration and pleasure did the descendants of the exiles dwell on their virtues, and the scenes they had hallowed by their abode and worship. The traditions of those days were among the choicest themes of conversation among the pilgrims, after they had settled down in New England. We fancy we see a family group listening to stories of the olden time, from the lips of the grey-headed sire who had known the worthies of the Amsterdam Church; and surely the little ones would look very grave, as they heard their father tell of a certain venerable dame, whom we find mentioned with much honour in the records of that period, as an ornament to her profession, who used to sit in a convenient place in the congregation, with a birchen rod in her hand, keeping the juveniles in awe, and thereby preventing any disturbance in the course of worship.

In connexion with the Church at Amsterdam, the name of Ainsworth demands further notice. He was the author of a learned commentary on the five books of Moses,—a work still highly prized by the biblical scholar. Indeed, his erudition was so greatly esteemed, that he was deemed by competent contemporary judges as one of the first Hebraists in Europe. It is affecting to read of this great man's poverty, soon after his arrival in the Low Countries, when, owing partly to the straitened circumstances of his friends, but chiefly to his own disinclination to inform them of his necessities, he subsisted, it is said, upon the miserable pittance of ninepence a-week; but when the circumstance

became known, and the means of the congregation increased, a comfortable provision was cheerfully made for the wants of this disinterested man. If what Neal says be correct, this able divine met with an untimely end. Having found a diamond in the streets of Amsterdam, he advertised the fact, and a Jew came to him and claimed the lost valuable. On being asked what reward he desired, the enthusiastic scholar requested a conference with the Rabbis on the prophecies of the Old Testament respecting Christ; which the Jew promised to obtain for him. But "not having interest enough to obtain it, it is thought Ainsworth was poisoned."

Robinson and his party did not tarry in Amsterdam more than a twelvemonth. The spirit of strife, which unhappily prevailed there, greatly distressed them; and they thought it advisable to remove to Leyden, where happily they found a peaceful home for many years. Robinson was now their pastor; the venerable Richard Clifton, who had watched over them in England with so much success, and who had accompanied them to Holland, being compelled to resign his charge from advanced age. The veteran's "white beard" is particularly mentioned in the New England traditions.

While Amsterdam was rising in mercantile wealth, Leyden was rising in literary reputation. By a singular but honourable preference, the citizens, on being offered by the Prince of Orange, in 1575, as a reward for their valour during the famous siege, either a remission of taxes, or the foundation of an university, at once chose the latter. The city ob-

tained the appellation of the Athens of the West; but with its cloisters of learning it combined busy manufactures: while in one street the student was engaged with his books, in another the weaver was sitting at his loom; but all breathed quietude and liberty; and one can scarcely imagine a more inviting home than that which Leyden presented to these weary-worn pilgrims, who came along the pleasant road from Amsterdam, "seeking peace above all other riches." If the history of the city they had left was calculated to stimulate them to industry, the history of the city they entered was adapted to keep alive their love of freedom. Traces might still be seen of the effects of the heroic deed performed by the citizens of Leyden, when, contending for their liberties, they preferred to inundate the city and neighbourhood, rather than submit to the cruel tyranny of Spain.

But if Leyden afforded a peaceful retreat, that was almost the only advantage it presented to our pilgrims; for the city being far inferior to Amsterdam in wealth and trade, it afforded them but a poor prospect of maintenance. Industry, however, was not one of the least valuable traits in their characters, and, setting themselves to work at such trades as they were competent to practise or able to learn, they obtained an humble and honest subsistence. Men who had bartered their prospects in life for liberty and religion, were not the men to be paralyzed by any difficulty which courage and zeal could overcome. Such of them as had learned the art of weaving employed themselves at the Leyden looms. Others were initiated into the craft of silk-dyeing, and some worked

as printers. But though their temporal circumstances were never very prosperous, their spiritual enjoyment in each other's society, and under the ministry of their beloved pastor, Mr. Robinson, was very great. "Yea, such was the mutual love and reciprocal respect that this worthy man had to his flock, and his flock to him, that it might be said of them, as it was once said of that famous emperor, Marcus Aurelius, and the people of Rome, that it was hard to judge whether he delighted more in having such a people, or they in having such a pastor." The society flourished both in the graces of the Spirit and in accessions to their numbers; for so remarkable was their peace and unity, that they attracted others like-minded with themselves from their native country, so that the Church at length amounted to nearly three hundred members.* When any differences arose in this primitive Christian community, they were straightway nipped in the bud by judicious treatment: when any parties acted inconsistently, they were reproved in the spirit of love; and when they proved incorrigible, which was seldom the case, they were solemnly cut off from communion. Though strict in their discipline, and strongly attached to their distinctive principles, they were far from being bigots. Robinson was a man of large-hearted benevolence and enlightened catholicity, and he breathed his own beautiful spirit over his flock. Nothing more offended the good man than to witness a great rigidity in the enforcement of subordinate matters, especially when such sternness on points of outward order was associated, as is sometimes the

* See Note [12].

case, with considerable laxity in points of moral conduct. He knew how to estimate "the tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin," in their relative value to the weightier matters of the law. Schism he condemned, and division he deplored. From the government and ceremonies of the Church of England his conscience compelled him to dissent, but he was prepared to welcome the pious of that and all other Christian communions to the fellowship of the Lord's table. "Our faith is not negative," he observes, "nor consists in the condemning of others, and wiping their names out of the bead-roll of churches, but in the edifying of ourselves; neither require we of any of ours, in the confession of their faiths, that they either renounce or in one word contest with the Church of England." The brethren of Leyden always treated with honour the reformed Churches of the Continent; and members of those communities might be seen participating with them in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. When on one occasion a Scotch refugee minister, residing in Leyden, and in the habit of attending on Mr. Robinson's preaching, requested, at the close of the sermon, that he might tarry as a spectator during the holy communion, the pastor replied, "Reverend Sir, you may not only stay to behold us, but partake with us, if you please, for we acknowledge the churches of Scotland to be the churches of Christ." The minister, however, felt some difficulty in accepting this catholic invitation, lest his rigid brethren at home should take offence at the proceeding.

Distinguished by so much unity, peacefulness, consistency, and true-hearted love, our exiles could not

but win the sincere respect of the Leyden citizens. The latter took their word, because they had found the strangers always prepared to keep it. They were glad to trade with them, ready to employ them, and, when circumstances required, to assist them by pecuniary loans. After the tradespeople of the city, in the commercial intercourse of life, had thus for a long period evinced their esteem of the English congregation, the magistrates on the bench of justice, upon the departure of their city guests to their new home on the other side the Atlantic, publicly bore testimony to their social virtues, declaring that the English had lived among them twelve years, and yet no suit or accusation had ever been brought against any of them. The reputation of their pastor for sanctity and learning, no doubt, greatly tended to raise the respectability of the Church in the estimation of the Dutch people. Circumstances afforded him ample scope for the display of his talents. The disputes between the Arminians and Calvinists raged in Leyden during his residence there, and in that far-famed controversy the English divine was called upon to take a part.

Episcopius had succeeded Arminius as divinity professor, and was zealously advocating the opinions of his renowned predecessor. Polyander, another professor of theology in the same college, with equal warmth supported the Calvinistic side of the controversy. Robinson, who was a thoughtful, well-skilled, and earnest theologian, could not but feel an interest in this grand religious dispute of the day, and therefore attended the lectures of both these eminent champions. He himself was a decided Calvinist, and by

his studies at this time became more than ever master of the subject. His theological reputation rendered him a formidable opponent and a valuable ally, and therefore the Calvinists courted his assistance, while the Arminians feared his attacks. Episcopius having put forth certain theses, and challenged his opponents to public disputes, Polyander requested Robinson to enter the lists. The English refugee, as modest as he was learned, at first shrunk from the idea, till, overcome by the persuasions of his friends, and still more by a sense of duty, he consented to accept the challenge. Robinson honourably acquitted himself in these disputations, and won increased respect and love from the Calvinists, at that time the leading party in Holland. Indeed, so great was their esteem for him, that it is affirmed he would have received some expression of national favour, had it not been for the fear of giving offence to the King of England. It would be departing from the object of this volume to enter into the history of the Arminian controversy in Holland, but I cannot help remarking how deeply it is to be regretted, that while the advocates of predestinarianism sought the aid of Robinson's argumentative powers, they did not also imbibe that mild and tolerant spirit which was breathed by his ecclesiastical principles, for then they would have saved the sacred name of religion from the dishonour done to it by the persecutions which ensued upon the decisions of the Council of Dort.

Eight years rolled away. The exiles were respected, and their pastor was honoured both by themselves and the Dutch citizens; yet they felt, after all, that they

were strangers in a strange land. The customs of the people differed from their own. To many of them the language of the country was unintelligible. They had to struggle with poverty, and endure hard toil. The fathers were getting old; the children were not all of the same heroic stamp with themselves. Every daughter was not a Ruth, nor every son a Cato.* Some of the young people, though they desired liberty, could not bear much hardship. Others, who were of a brave and earnest spirit, and loving religious freedom beyond everything, bore the yoke till it bowed down their strength, and the vigour of nature was consumed in the bud. But what much more grieved the hearts of some, who were parents, was that they saw their offspring exposed to the corrupting influence of bad example. Many of the young people were not proof against temptation. They fell into courses of licentiousness. One became a soldier, another went to sea. Many a father mourned, many a mother wept; and good Mr. Robinson would strive to soothe them in his pastoral visitations and his public preaching.

But what was to be the future course of the exiles? This became daily a more and more pressing question. They thought of England—thought of its beautiful scenery, and peaceful homesteads, and busy cities, where, as boys and girls, they had lived in happiness, and which, after all their persecutions from an unjust Government, it was impossible they could ever cease to love. It was their native land; and they were bound to it by Nature's spell, which no tyranny could break. Often, as they paced the flat banks of the Dutch canal,

* Young's Chronicles, p. 45.

did they sigh for the hills and vales of their own more beautiful region,—

“For the shieling wood, and stream girt,
Where Romance youth’s summer sped;
For the belfry by the gray kirk,
In whose shadow slept their dead.”

Their mother tongue was dear to them. The name of England they revered; even the name of its intolerant King they pronounced with honour. They feared their posterity would forget that tongue, and neglect to cherish those names. Yet return to their much-loved England was impracticable: persecution frowned on them from its sands and cliffs, and they dared not to seek their home again upon its shores.

But there was another land far away over the broad Atlantic, of which they had heard, whose virgin soil was fruitful, and whose air was free for all who wished to breathe it, and the thought struck them, that amidst those untenanted wilds of nature they might found a colony, and build up a church, and preserve their name, their language, and their faith, and advance Christ’s kingdom, and be as stepping-stones to others in performing a great work. And who can tell what dim and shadowy images of a grand destiny to be accomplished there might arise before the eyes, and awaken strange emotion in the nobler spirits of that world-despised band of Independent Christians?

It was a great thought, the seed of a great empire, which was thrown out by the man, whoever he was, that first suggested to his companions the daring enterprise. I should like to know the spot on which it was expressed, and to have a picture of the counte-


nances of the rest of the exiles in the moment of hearing it. Amidst the political and theological contentions of Holland, which filled Europe with their fame, the sayings and doings of that humble Congregation never caught the public ear; but there were impulses among them at work which were to strike most powerfully on the destinies of the world; and when the history of great souls shall be revealed in eternity, doubtless the words and deeds of these, and such as these, will be more prominent in the Divine record than those displays of skilful statesmanship and physical valour on which the pens of historians now are wont to linger.

Some glimpses of the debates upon this project by these good men are afforded in Bradford's Narrative. Persons among them there were who were startled at the proposal. "It is a great design," said they, "and subject to many inconceivable perils and dangers: besides the casualties of the seas, the length of the voyage is such as the weak bodies of men and women, and such other persons, worn out with age and travel, as many of us are, could never be able to endure; and if we should do so, the miseries we should be exposed to in that land will be too hard for us to bear; it is likely that some or all will effect our ruin. We shall be liable to famine, and nakedness, and want. The changing of the air, diet, and water, will infect us with sickness; and those who escape these evils will be in danger of the savages, who are cruel and barbarous, not being content to kill, but delighting to torment in the most bloody manner, flaying men alive with the shells of fishes, cutting off the joints by

piecemeal, broiling them on coals, and eating collops of their flesh in their very sight." And the good men shuddered as these horrors darkened in their imagination; and then, turning to look at other matters, less terrific, yet not to be slighted, they urged, "It will require more money than we can furnish for such a voyage. Similar schemes have failed (alluding, perhaps, to the plantation project at Sagadahoc in 1607), and our experience in removing to Holland teaches us how hard it is to live in a strange country, though it be a civil and rich commonwealth." So they pleaded; and the hearts of the weaker died within them. But others in that chamber of council rose and said, "All great and honourable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and must be met and overcome with answerable courage. It is granted that the dangers are great, but they are not desperate; the difficulties are many, but not invincible; though many of them are likely, none of them are certain. Some of the things feared may never befall us; others, by care and providence, and the use of means, may be, in a measure, prevented, and all, through the help of God, by fortitude and patience, may be overcome. True it is, that such attempts are not to be undertaken but upon good grounds; not lightly, as many have done, for curiosity or gain: but our ends are not common, but good and honourable; our calling lawful and urgent; and therefore we may expect the blessing of God on our proceedings. Yea, and though we should lose our lives in this action, we may have comfort in it, for the endeavour will be honourable. We have lived here but as men in exile, and in a poor condition, and as

great miseries may befall us here as there, for the twelve years' truce is now expired, and there is nothing but beating of drums and preparing for war. The Spaniard may prove as cruel as the savage of America, and the famine and the pestilence be as sore here as yonder, with less liberty to look out for remedy." That was a noble-hearted strain of speech, and showed that they who uttered it were under the influence of another order of feeling altogether than that which swayed their timid brethren.

Amidst other curious papers by the distinguished philosopher Wollaston, he wrote one "on sounds inaudible to certain ears." "Some persons," he observed, "are free from deafness, yet are insensible to shrill notes—to the cricket's chirp, and the swallow's twitter;" and he proceeds to suggest it as possible that insects may emit and listen to sounds which men never hear, while they are deaf to the graver tones of the human voice. The moral world seems a curious counterpart of the physical. There are shrill notes of fear which rouse the emotions of one class of minds, to which others are insensible; and there are trumpet tones of courage, which thrill through some souls, while the rest remain deaf to their inspiring appeal. So it was on this occasion. The weaker brethren heard only the shrill suggestions of their own fears: the heroic ones were deaf to all but those grave, deep inspirations, full of daring but calm decision, which came over them like voices from eternity. The resemblance of the moral to the physical phenomena in this present case, as it regarded some, lasted only for a while; for the nobler-minded at length diffused the



contagion of their own dauntless spirit over the hearts of others, who were at first timid and reluctant to embark in the enterprise. None, however, trusted simply to the force of argument and human persuasion. They looked to a higher Power. By prayer and fasting they sought the Spirit's teaching, and, no doubt, earnest were the wrestlings of those devout men with the Angel of the Covenant that they might know His will. After much reflection, and earnest supplications for guidance, the majority determined to enter on the undertaking.

Then came the inquiry, What part of America should they select for their future home? Guiana was named, and its claims enforced on the ground of its being blessed with perpetual spring, and a flourishing greenness; but it was objected, that the climate was insalubrious, and, especially, that the fierce, intolerant, and jealous Spaniard was already there. At last Virginia was selected as, on the whole, a more favourable spot. Two were sent to England to confer with the Virginia Company, and to gain, if possible, the King's broad seal to authorize the undertaking. The Company entered into their views, but the King, as was to be expected, refused his sanction, though he was not unwilling to connive at their proceedings, provided they went on peaceably. The want of the seal became a trouble to some; but others shrewdly observed, "it would not be of much use if they had it, 'for though the seal were as broad as the house floor,' there would be means enough found, if the author wished, to recall or reverse it." There was much arguing on the subject; deputations crossed and re-crossed the German

Ocean; many letters were written, consultations held, and prayers offered, till, ultimately, the emigrants resolved upon going to *New England*, with no other patent than what they had at first obtained under the idea of colonizing Virginia,* and with no other seal than the broad one of the Divine sanction, which they were persuaded they had obtained.

It was arranged that some should go before the rest, under the direction of Mr. Brewster, an elder of the Church. In prospect of their departure, the whole Church spent a day of humiliation, and Robinson preached from the beautiful text, "And there, at the river by Ahava, I proclaimed a fast, that we might humble ourselves before our God, and seek of Him a right way for us, and for our children, and for all our substance."† It was an affecting occasion,—the pastor's heart was full; and it is reported that he spent a good part of the day very profitably and suitably to the occasion. Only a brief outline of that memorable sermon has been preserved. We would gladly give whole shoals of published discourses in exchange for that one homily. While, however, the far greater portion is lost in the long silence of the past, the fragments of this great man's utterances on the occasion, happily spared to us, we will gather up and preserve among our richest relics. We seem to be sitting among the Congregation. Many around us are in tears. Amidst the deep stillness of the place, an audible sob now and then breaks out, as the preacher proceeds:—

* See Note [13].

† Ezra viii. 21. Version in Bradford's Narrative.

“Brethren, we are now ere long to part asunder, and the Lord knoweth whether ever I shall live to see your faces again. But whether the Lord hath appointed it or not, I charge you before God and his blessed angels to follow me no farther than I have followed Christ. If God should reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry, for I am very confident the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word.

“Miserably do I bewail the state and condition of the reformed Churches, who are come to a period in religion, and would go no farther than the instruments of their reformation; as, for example, the Lutherans, they could not go beyond what Luther saw; for whatever part of God’s will he has further imparted by Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. So, also, you see the Calvinists, they stick where he left them,—a misery much to be lamented; for though they were precious shining lights in their times, yet God did not reveal his whole will to them; and were they now living, doubtless they would be willing to embrace further light as that which they did receive.”

Much is said in these days about the development of Christianity. The sage Robinson understood this matter. The Bible, not the fathers, formed his text-book; but he saw there depths of truth and glory, into which he was persuaded thoughtful minds might penetrate farther and farther as time rolled on. The Bible was to him like the universe, a system unchangeable in its great facts and principles, but ever opening

wider and brighter upon studious and devout minds. He knew there would be no change in God's Word, and no addition made to its contents; but he looked for beautiful and improving changes in men's views—for broader, clearer, and more powerful conceptions of God's truth. There was deep philosophy as well as sound practical direction and Christian pathos in Robinson's sermon. But he was neither Rationalist nor Mystic, and knew how to guard his notion of development from abuse.

"Remember your Church covenant," he says, "in which you have agreed to walk in all the ways of the Lord made known, or to be made known, to you. Remember, you promise and covenant with God and with one another to receive whatever light or truth shall be made known to you from his written word; but withal, take heed, I beseech you, what you receive for truth, and compare it and weigh it with other Scriptures of truth before you receive it; for it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-Christian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once."

Robinson was no snarling schismatic, but a friend to Christian Catholic Union; for he goes on to say, in his practical directions, "Another thing I commend to you. By all means shake off the name of Brownist. It is a mere nickname and brand to make religion odious, and the professors of it, to the Christian world. And to that end I should be glad if some godly minister would go over with you before my coming (Robinson meant to follow with the rest of the Congregation), for there will be no difference between

the unconformable (the Puritan, or nonconforming clergy, who had not renounced the Church of England,) and you, when you come to the practice of the ordinances out of the kingdom. By all means close with the godly party of the kingdom of England, and rather study union than division,—in how nearly we may possibly, without sin, close with them, than in the least measure to affect division or separation from them.”

“Be not loth,” he further enjoins, “to take another pastor or teacher; for that flock that hath two shepherds is not endangered but secured by it.” With this commendation of a plurality of Bishops in a Church the fragment abruptly terminates. “There were other things of great and weighty consequence,” we are told, uttered on the occasion. Would we could recover them, with all their touching appeals and farewells; but with many other precious things said by tongues long since silent, they lie beyond our reach. What remains, however, is of the greatest value, and worthy of the study, the careful study, of all who, like Robinson, are called Independents.

Before the pilgrims embarked, a parting entertainment was given them by their brethren at the pastor’s house, where they refreshed their hearts by fraternal intercourse and devotional exercises. On the 21st July they left the city of Leyden, which had been their quiet resting-place for eleven years, and journeyed to Delft Haven, where a ship waited to receive them. Their removal must have required some preparation, and must have excited some attention, for “the number of the names was about a hundred

and twenty," and they were accompanied on their journey by most of the members of the Church, especially the more aged people, who, though from their infirmities they could not undertake a long voyage, and encounter the difficulties of a new colonial settlement, entered with the deepest sympathy into the spirit of the enterprise. They tarried in Delft Haven that night, and were joined by another party from Leyden, who had followed them as early as possible, to take a parting look and hear the last farewell. To many it was a sleepless night, and was spent in Christian conversation and expressions of true Christian love. The morning sun must have gleamed mournfully upon their eyes through the windows of the apartments where they were assembled. It told them the last day of their pleasant intercourse with old and endeared friends had come, for the wind was fresh and fair, and the vessel was ready to weigh anchor and depart. And so they went down to the shore, where the scene at Miletus was literally repeated, save that the people were the voyagers instead of their apostolic father. "He kneeled down and prayed with them all, and they wept sore, and fell upon his neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more; and he accompanied them to the ship." Even the Dutch strangers, who saw the parting, stood and wept. Many eyes, full of tears, watched the sails of that vessel as they shone upon the distant waters, like a flake of snow, till the little white speck quite melted from their view.

That vessel, with its rich cargo of true-hearted men,

speedily reached Southampton. The voyage answered the name of the vessel, and the *Speedwell* entered port to join the *Mayflower*,—ships whose names have become hallowed, and are worthy of being placed, with the *Argo* of the ancients, amidst the constellations of heaven.

It pertains not to our office to tell the story of the voyage—of the parting of the *Mayflower* from the *Speedwell*, and the solitary course of the former vessel, containing all the party who at that time went, and the incidents on the way, and the battling with the elements, and the landing at Cape Cod, and their adventures there, and their coasting expedition, till the feet of the pilgrims stood on the Plymouth Rock. The story belongs to the heroic age of America, and may well inspire the enthusiasm of her historians, for no other nation can boast of such an origin, and can adorn its earliest annals with a tale as true as it is beautiful, as authentic as it is sublime. And when America shall produce her Virgil, he will find in the voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers a theme for his muse surpassing his of the olden time who sang the adventures of *Æneas*,—

“Trojæ qui primus ab oris
Italiam, fato profugus, Lavinia venit
Littora.”

Robinson's heart was with the pilgrims, but there were insuperable difficulties in the way of his following them. The want of sufficient means was the main hindrance; but he also had to struggle with contentious spirits at Leyden, and to meet the opposition of some in New England, who, knowing the energy of

his mind and the weight of his character, feared, on selfish grounds, his influence in the rising colony. But it mattered little. His Lord and Master had other designs respecting him, and on the 1st of March, 1625, took him away, "even as fruit falleth before it is ripe, when neither length of days nor infirmity of body did seem to call for his end." * His remains were interred in the chancel of one of the churches at Leyden, allotted by the Dutch for the use of the English exiles; and the magistrates, ministers, professors, students, and most of the gentry of the place followed him to the grave.

Robinson was a great man. The allusions made to him in the documents connected with the Leyden Church and the Pilgrim Fathers show him to have been one of those superior spirits, who are born to lead their fellow-men, and on whom feebleness can rest with confidence and love. "Strength and beauty" were finely blended in his composition. With a strong mind, he had a tender heart. His understanding was of a manly make, calm, clear, vigorous. His controversial writings attest his theological skill, and his practical compositions evince his reflective habits, and his sound views of morals and religion. He was a man of superior learning, of which the reputation in which he was held by the University of Leyden is a proof; but he blended with the pursuits of the scholar habits of enlarged intercourse with mankind, and shrewd, business-like observation of human character and things. Though he did not cultivate the

* Young's Chronicles, p. 481. He was born in 1575, but the place of his birth has never been ascertained.

graces of style, nor adorn his pages with the flowers of imagination, we cannot peruse his writings without feeling that they possess the charm of practised thought and earnest truthfulness. He was no enthusiast. "To trust to means is idolatry, to abuse them want of wisdom or of conscience," is a remark he makes in his "Essays;" and it is one which we find illustrated by his prudent conduct throughout his history. His lot was a troubled one, but he had not learned to look upon the world with a jaundiced eye; and it was in no "sour, Puritanical spirit" that he said, "If a man set his thoughts a-work upon inconveniences and discommodities alone, he shall heap sorrow on sorrow; but if, on the contrary, he draw into consideration such inconveniences as usually fall in with their contraries, he shall always find some matter of ease, and sometimes that meat comes out of the eater, and that which at first seemed a cross is rather a benefit."* His catholic feeling, which increased with his years, expanding itself beyond all sectarian limits, so uncommon in that age, shows him to have been a man with a great soul; for his catholicity was not the mere echo of other voices, calling him to the exercise of peace and love, but it was the voice of one who stood almost alone, pleading for union in times of discord, and running the risk of offending the narrower minds who belonged to his party. Yet his firm attachment to his distinctive principles, which had made him an exile in fact, and a martyr in spirit, demonstrated that he was no latitudinarian, but that he knew how to combine a love to

* Robinson's *Essays*, Observ. xxxiii.

all good men, with a steady adherence to his own conscientious views on minor points. Abstaining from that infallible tone of decision in such matters, which belongs not exclusively to Rome; forbearing to fix any *ne plus ultra* mark in the path of ecclesiastical reformation, such as other communities beside the Church of England seem virtually to have done; knowing that truth is not learned all at once, and that time is a valuable teacher as to the mode in which the working of a system is to be accommodated to the state of society, he enjoined upon his brethren to watch and wait for further light. He was a specimen of the true Reformer, well described as one "who supposes no wonders in himself, and expects them not in others; and is rather the sower who goes forth to sow his seed, than the lord who comes to gather into barns."*

Congregational Christians call no man master on earth, nor should they; but it will show them only wise and grateful to revere the name, follow the advice, and walk in the steps of *John Robinson*.

* Smyth's Lectures on History, vol. i. 94.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHURCH IN SOUTHWARK.

“ Compared with this, how poor religion’s pride—
In all the pomp of method and of art;
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion’s every grace except the heart.

“ The Power incensed the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole,
But haply in some cottage, far apart,
May hear well pleased the language of the soul,
And in his book of life the inmates poor enrol.”

BURNS.

HENRY JACOB is a name worthy of being held in remembrance and honour by the friends of religious liberty. He is one of the few Puritan worthies whom Anthony Wood mentions in terms of respect; and, certainly, the general reputation of that man must have stood high, who, while identified with Puritanism, and even with Independency, escaped the virulent treatment of the heartily-bigoted historian of the Oxford University. Jacob had been originally a clergyman in Kent, and had written against Johnson, in defence of the Church of England; but gradually his mind became dissatisfied with the episcopal system,

till, on visiting Leyden, where he had a conference with Robinson, he decidedly embraced Independent principles. His work on toleration, published in the year 1609, though little known, deserves to be rescued from oblivion, and to have an honourable place assigned to it in the history of the grand struggle in our country for liberty of conscience. The Puritan, Humphrey, in the previous century, as we have seen, pleaded for the toleration of certain parties within the Established Church; but Jacob was the first to claim, as a sacred right, the liberty of subjects to form distinct Churches according to their conscientious views of the will of Christ.* It was, however, only to those who held the Protestant faith that this early advocate of liberty was for extending toleration. Fearful of the Papal Church, as the ancient enemy of the privilege he sought, he wished nothing should be concluded from his argument in favour of those whose head, he affirms, is Antichrist, whose worship is idolatry, whose doctrine is heresy, and whose profession is contrary to the lawful state and government of free countries. Such an exception our larger views of religious liberty have taught us is inconsistent and unjust; but with the recollection, then so fresh in men's minds, of the intolerance of Popery, it was hardly to be wondered at that even an enlightened advocate of toleration should exclude the Papists from its benefits. "Religious Peace, or a Plea for Liberty of Conscience," by Leonard Busher, a citizen of London, appeared in 1614; and in the following year there issued from the press

* See ample quotations from Jacob's tract in Hanbury's *Memo-rials*, vol. i. p. 226.

another work of the same class, entitled "Persecution for Religion Judged, and Condemned." * Busher, and the author of this last publication, were certainly, in their views of religious liberty, much in advance of their brethren. They were both Antipædobaptists; and it should be deemed matter of peculiar interest, and of thankfulness to God, by the Congregational and Baptist denominations of the present day, that to their despised fathers was vouchsafed the honour of standing in the front of freedom's battle. These humble tracts have been too long forgotten, while incomparably less meritorious productions have called forth the investigation and the praise of the antiquarian critic. The solid value of these Puritan treatises has missed its meed of honour because they were written by men unknown, while the most trifling fragments written by pens of illustrious name have been treasured up with idolatrous care; but so it is,—

"Men give to dust that is a little gilt
More praise than they will give to gold o'erdusted."

Jacob, while still in Holland, published in the year 1610, and the two following years, three small tracts, explaining his views of Independency; and not long afterwards returned to England, to consult with some of the leading Puritans respecting the lawfulness of forming a Congregation upon the principles he had embraced. They did not dissuade him from such a course; and therefore, in the year 1616, he laid the foundation of a Congregational Church in London.

* These tracts have been published by the Hansard Knollys Society, under the laborious and intelligent editorship of Mr. Underhill.

The place of their first meeting is not mentioned; it was probably in some private dwelling long since swept away by the tide of modern improvements; but the simple ceremonial adopted on the occasion, which vividly brings before us the primitive scene, has been faithfully recorded. It was akin to that already described as taking place in St. Nicholas-lane. A day of fasting and prayer was appointed; and at the close of the solemnity the brethren rose, joined hands, and solemnly covenanted with each other, in the presence of Almighty God, to walk together in all God's ways and ordinances, according as He had already revealed them, or should further make them known. These fathers of Independency, in that old house of the seventeenth century, with hearts panting for religious liberty, their hands locked in each other, and solemnly vowing before God to follow the light He should grant them, has in it a touch of the moral sublime, which, though the background of the picture differs, and the spirit which animated that forgotten band was peaceful instead of warlike, reminds us of the oath of Rutli, and the three-and-thirty who clasped hands under the See-lisberg, by the Lake of Uri, swearing before God the famous league of Swiss liberty. Some may smile at the comparison of our obscure Nonconformist fathers with heroes whose fame is as wide as the world, but we are inclined to think that in the eye of Heaven the latter appear the less noble of the two.

Mr. Hanbury, a pains-taking antiquary in such matters, contends that a Congregational Church was formed in London by a Mr. Hubbard five years before Jacob founded his; that some of Jacob's members pro-

bably merged into the elder Church at a subsequent period; and that from them may be traced in a direct line the community of Independent Christians now assembling in Union-street, Southwark. Leaving this question, it may be confidently stated that at least one Congregational Church from the year 1616 continued to exist throughout the persecutions which followed.

In Neal's history we catch a few glimpses of this little Church.* On the 29th of April, 1632, the Bishop's pursuivant hunts after the Congregation, and finds them at Mr. Humphrey Barnet's, a brewer's clerk, in Blackfriars, when eighteen escape, and forty-two are seized, of whom some are taken to the Clink, others to the New Prison, and the Gate-house, where they continue for two years, and are then released on bail. Mr. Lathrop, their minister at the time, is grievously treated, and can only be liberated from gaol on condition of leaving the country, which he does, betaking himself, like others of the oppressed, to the friendly shores of New England. Mr. Canne, celebrated as the author of the marginal references in our Bible, succeeds him, till worn out by persecution he goes over to Holland. Mr. Samuel How then undertakes the charge, but, being not sufficiently stealthy in times of espionage, soon lays himself open to the informers, escapes for a while, is then seized, shut up in prison, and dies. His friends seek to pay him the last rites of natural affection in Shoreditch churchyard; but, no! he is excommunicated, and only deserves the burial of a dog, and therefore the poor people must bury him where they can; whereupon they take his ashes to an

* Neal, vol. ii. p. 108.

unconsecrated spot, called Agnes le Clair; but the interment of the pastor hallows the spot in the estimation of his flock, and they wish to have their bones mingle with his, so that Agnes le Clair* at length becomes as sacred as Shoreditch.† Then Mr. More, a citizen of London, of good natural parts, and of considerable substance in the world, accepts the office, to the apparent hazard of his estate and freedom. But times brighten; the reign of intolerance is drawing to a close, and the people who have been shifting from place to place, fearing detection, become bold, and publicly open a house for worship.

There stood in Southwark, in the seventeenth century, a building, which, though long since razed to the ground, has covered the spot on which it rose with classic associations in the eyes of the lovers of the drama,—it was the Globe theatre, of which William Shakspeare was one of the patentees, and where the productions of his unparalleled genius thrilled and delighted many a crowded audience. It was burnt down in 1613, and rebuilt in 1614. Hard by that theatre, at the end of Globe-alley, in which it stood, there lay a piece of ground, bearing the mournful appellation of Deadman's-place, from the number of persons buried there during the plague of London in 1625. It was in some building within that space that Mr. More,

* Agnes le Clair was the name of a well on the site of part of Old-street-road and Hoxton-square. "Somewhat north from Holy Well is one other well, curved square with stone, and is called Dame Annis the Clear; and not far from it, but somewhat next, is also one other clear water, called Perilous Pool, because divers youths by swimming therein have been drowned."—*Stow*, p. 7.

† In the *Patriot* newspaper, a few years ago, there was an account of the discovery and exhumation of the remains of Mr. How.

and the good people of his Church, first publicly met for religious service. The theatre was then on the wane, but religious freedom was beginning to hold up its head. Associations of one class cluster round Globe-alley; associations of another class cluster round Deadman's-place;—the merely literary will cherish the former and despise the latter: but the man who with a taste for literature cultivates the spirit of evangelical religion, and the love of liberty, while he looks with interest towards the one spot as closely connected with the intellectual history of his country, will look with a more sacred interest on the other, connected as it is with our religious history, and with the progress of principles, little understood, but of the highest benefit to mankind at large. That same theatre, too, comes afterwards into connexion with the history of Protestant Dissent, for on its site, or just by where it stood, there was, at the close of the seventeenth century, a building called Maid-lane Meeting; and some have affirmed even that the theatre itself, having been shut up during the Commonwealth, was subsequently accommodated to purposes of religious worship.*

The Congregation in Deadman's-place, having become so bold as to worship with open doors, naturally attracted attention; and as their proceedings were not legalized, though they were encouraged by the increasingly liberal spirit of the times, it was to be expected that such as were violently opposed to their principles would seek to molest them. Accordingly, one Lord's day, the 16th of January, 1641, when they were assembled for divine service, the constables and

* See Note [14].

churchwardens of St. Saviour's made their appearance, and apprehended six of the parties, who were forthwith taken before Sir John Lenthall, Marshal of the King's Bench. They were charged with violating the law of the 35th of Elizabeth, which established the Common Prayer-Book as the only form of Christian worship to be used in the realm; but they replied that it was a law made by the Bishops, and they would not obey it. They refused to attend the parish-churches, alleging that they were not true churches; and they further objected entirely to the *ecclesiastical* supremacy of the King. The Marshal immediately committed them to the Clink, not far from the place of their apprehension, where they were detained till the 18th of January, when they were summoned to appear before the House of Lords. The course they had pursued would, twelve months before, as Neal says, have cost them their ears, but a new spirit had now come over the high powers of England. King Charles the First was in a far different position now from his father King James when he threatened to harry the Puritans out of the land. The Long Parliament had met; the influence of the House of Commons was rapidly on the increase; Star-chamber practices were at an end; ecclesiastical tyranny, in the person of Archbishop Laud, had just been dethroned; and it was, therefore, not the time for the House of Lords to treat with severity the parties arraigned before them. They simply reprimanded them, enjoined their future attendance at the parish-church, and threatened punishment in case of further disobedience.* This simple

* Journal of the House of Lords.

threat looks poor after the doings of former days, and it shows that intolerance was on the wane. Those who had seen the thunderbolt in the hands of Laud and others would now "hardly be intimidated at the sallies of decrepitude—the impotent darts of Priam amidst the crackling ruins of Troy."*

But there were a few of the Lords who looked with much respect on these accused persons, and treated them with much civility. They inquired where they held their meetings, and promised to come and hear them. It was probably with little expectation of the fulfilment of the promise that these worthies left the House of Lords, but to their surprise on the following Sunday they saw three or four peers entering the Conventicle. The preacher went on in his usual way, and delivered two discourses to his flock on the very principles for the maintenance of which they had so recently been arraigned before the Upper House, to which discourses the noble lords listened with much patience. Nay, further, on the administration of the Lord's Supper, which followed the sermon, these illustrious visitors contributed to the collection; and at the close of the service expressed their satisfaction with what they had witnessed and their intention to come again. But the presence of nobility at a Nonconformist service, being then so marvellous a thing, became a topic of general conversation; and fearing that the populace would be excited by a repetition of the visit, these liberal peers were no more seen within the humble place of worship in St. Saviour's, Southwark.

* See Hallam's *Middle Ages*, vol. i. p. 488.


CHAPTER V.

THE BRAVE LORD BROOKE.

“ Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise or blame, nothing but well and fair.”

MILTON, *Samson Agonistes*.

AMONG the beautiful rivers that run through the heart of old England, there is one which, though inferior to some of its sister streams in the scenery which adorns its banks, surpasses them all in its rich associations. The world's greatest poet played in his boyhood beside its gentle waters, and gathered the wild flowers which they had moistened and nourished. From the edge of Shakspeare's river, at one of its most picturesque points, there rises, in abrupt grandeur, a massive rock, crowned with a fine specimen of the baronial architecture of the middle ages. The battlemented front, pierced by many a deep window, broken by projecting buttresses, and flanked by lofty machicolated towers, stretches along the water's side, throwing its broad shadow, on a summer's day, over the silvery surface of the river. Dark pines, with their lofty heads, skirt the lordly castle, and with their



outspread branches, here and there stooping to touch the water, add to the sombre beauty of the picture. An old mill is seen at the foot of the castle bank, where the rude water-wheel, in its lazy revolutions, throws its flushes over the stream; the weir spreads across from bank to bank, with its murmurs so musical on a quiet summer's evening; and the time-mouldered remains of the ancient bridge, with its broken arches, still span the river.

No one who has crossed the Avon, on the road from Leamington to Warwick, and stood by the foot of the new stone bridge, or leaned over the parapet, gazing at the scene on the south side, but must recognise, in the foregoing description, the noble castle of Warwick, on the banks of the Avon. There it stands, a monument of the age when feudal rudeness was giving place to modern refinement, and the baron's stronghold was swelling into the palace of chivalry with its courtly halls, open courts, oriel windows, and richly-adorned apartments. When passing through the edifice, or loitering within its precincts, one thinks of the Beauchamps, and of the proud race of Nevil, with its famous king-maker, the Earl of Warwick,—of the wonderful doings in the way of hospitality by that prince of hosts, and of the dark deeds of violence that have been enacted within those walls. The place, with its antique grandeur and romantic associations, is one of those scenes which, after being once visited, remains mirrored on the memory for ever.

But what has Warwick Castle to do with Puritanism and Nonconformity? The following narrative will supply the answer.

King James bestowed the castle on Fulke Greville, whom he created Lord Brooke, a man of learning, taste, political importance, and historical celebrity, who chose to transmit his memory to all ages in the well-known epitaph on his tomb in the interesting church of St. Mary, Warwick, — “Fulke Greville, servant to Queen Elizabeth, councillor to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sydney.” He was barbarously murdered by a discontented servant in the year 1628, when his barony and estates descended to his kinsman, Robert Greville.

Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, was a man of thoughtful mind, ardent feeling, and high principle. Having received an education suited to his rank, he employed his vigorous intellect in the study of questions relating to theology and ecclesiastical government, and applied the results of his study to the controversies of the times. The character of the patriot was associated with that of the scholar and the theologian, and he looked with a keen eye and an earnest heart to those coming events in the history of his country which were then throwing their long shadows before them. As he sat in his chamber at Warwick Castle, with the New Testament and the earliest documents of ecclesiastical history before him, he saw how different was the simple episcopacy of the primitive times from the prelacy of his own day,—that Christ’s kingdom was not of this world, and that the Church of England was sadly fettered and corrupted by its secular alliance. Musing much upon such matters, he employed his retirement during the parliamentary recess of 1641 in composing “a discourse opening the nature of that

episcopacy which is exercised in England." In that little quarto volume may be found a well-digested mass of learning and thought, tinctured, it is true, with severe reflections upon the ecclesiastical abuses of the times. He describes the character of the primitive Bishop as a true and faithful overseer of one congregation, and contrasts with this simple model the prelacy of his own day. He considers that the humble origin of many of the Clergy, and the theological studies which ought to be the chief business of them all, form by no means fitting qualifications for intermeddling with matters of state; and that if, by attention to politics, they prepare themselves for the functions of government, it must be to the neglect of their spiritual duties. He maintains that the combination of civil and religious authority is a burden too heavy to be borne by any shoulders but his on whom God has placed both the world's and the Church's government. The consequences of prelacy this noble polemic touches with a firm hand. The Bishop is dependent on the royal power who creates him, and whose further favour, in the shape of translation to a richer see, he hopes to enjoy; and hence a spirit of servility is likely to be the consequence. "None," he says, "ought to vote in parliament but free men; but how can they be deemed free who depend on another's thought?" He then grapples with the famous maxim, "No Bishop, no King;" and shows that to maintain this is to weaken, if not to break the nerves and ligaments of supreme power; nay, to say that such a government will best suit with monarchy, is to veil its lustre, which can easily assimilate all things to itself, but is not changed

by any. He proceeds to inquire what reason there is why Church government, after the Presbyterian or Congregational order, may not subsist with civil monarchy, observing that true Church power "works in a sweet way," and that so long as the Church intermeddleth not with the State, the State ought not to intermeddle with the Church. After advocating the popular election of Congregational Presbyters or Bishops, and their ordination by their brethren, who are all equals in rank, and asserting that ecclesiastical power is vested in the whole people, he answers the objections of those who apprehend confusion would follow from a change in relation to Church affairs, and concludes the work, at which we have thus hastily glanced, with the following passage, which breathes a truly catholic spirit:—

"When God shall so enlarge a man's heart, and unveil his face, that the poor creature is brought into communion and acquaintance with his Creator, steered in all his ways by his Spirit, and by it carried up above shame, fear, pleasure, comfort, losses, the grave, and death itself, let us not censure such tempers, but bless God for them; so far as Christ is in us, we shall love, prize, and honour Christ, and the least particle of his image in others, for we never prove ourselves members of Christ more than when we embrace his members with most enlarged yet straitest affections. To this end, God assisting me, my desire, prayer, and endeavour shall still be, as much as in me lies, to follow peace and holiness; and though there may haply be some little dissent between my dark judgment and weak conscience and other good men, that are more

clear and strong, yet my prayer still shall be, to keep the unity of the spirit in this bond of peace. And as many as walk after this rule, peace I hope shall still be on them and the whole Israel of God."

Such were the sentiments of the noble owner of Warwick Castle in the year 1641. He was a decided Independent.* It would be difficult to point out any great difference in relation to views of religious polity between him and the humble Congregation worshipping in Southwark; and it seems by no means improbable that he was one of the noble lords who visited that little band, and admired their order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ.

We have seen Lord Brooke in the character of a dissenting polemic and an earnest Christian. He is better known to history as a patriot and a soldier, and has left behind him a name deserving of honour, though it has come down to us aspersed by party prejudice.

The book just noticed was written on the eve of the civil war. During the summer months of 1642, the King and parliament were in decided opposition, and an appeal to arms became inevitable. The purpose to resist the encroachments of the sovereign on the liberties of the people had gradually risen, and was now firmly established in the minds of many distinguished men, and in that solemn purpose Lord Brooke keenly sympathized.† On the other side, the King was fully resolved to contend for what he assumed were his prerogatives. The mustering of the hosts for the battle was now at hand. Brooke was as brave as he was thoughtful, as valorous in the use of his sword as he was skilful in the employment of his pen; and when,

* See Note [15].

† See Note [16].

in his view, there remained no hope for the liberties of England but in physical resistance, he threw his energies into that awful conflict, and accepted a colonel's commission in the parliamentary army. Nothing but disinterested patriotism and a stern sense of duty could have induced such men as Lord Brooke to take the course they did. For themselves they had nothing to gain, but much to lose from a civil war. They sacrificed their ease, they hazarded their estates, they imperilled their lives, with no prize in prospect but their country's good, no reward before them but the approbation of their own consciences. As the noble owner of Warwick Castle enjoyed his calm retreat, surrounded by his family,—as he looked from his windows on his broad domain,—as he paced the greensward by the gentle Avon, and thought of the horrors with which civil conflict might ere long cover that calm and happy scene, it must have been with reluctance, though it was with steady heroism, that he buckled on the sword.

Amidst clouds of antiquarian dust, we get some glimpses of Lord Brooke and his brave followers at the very commencement of the war. An old pamphlet, dated 3rd August, 1642, announces a "Famous victory, obtained by Lord Brooke against the Earl of Northampton, near Keinteth, in Warwickshire." My Lord Brooke set out from Warwick with three hundred musketeers and two hundred horse; a little band, but it swelled mightily as it marched along, for so many persons, well affected to the cause of the parliament, met and joined it, that before the noble colonel led his men three miles on their road, he could number about three thousand horse and foot. The movement

was evidently popular in those parts. "The country," says a letter-writer of that day, whose epistle has survived to tell some little incidents about this early skirmish,— "The country sent my Lord Brooke six load of harrows, to keep off horses, and a cart-load of bread and cheese, and great store of beer."* These raw recruits, thus humbly supplied in the commissariat department, seem to have been stout-hearted men and thoroughly in earnest; for when Lord Brooke asked them, "Are you resolved to stand it out?" they showed such eagerness to engage, and raised such enthusiastic shouts, that his lordship wept for joy. But to repress any rashness on the part of his troops, and to show how loth he was to spill the blood of his countrymen, he entreated his soldiers, for the kingdom's sake, not to fire a single pistol but in self-defence. Happily no pistol-firing was needful. Northampton's men, on the sight of the three thousand parliamentarians, threw down their arms and ran away, "leaving the earl," says the old pamphlet, "none but one of his gentlemen and two footboys to attend him, which caused the said earl to try whether he or his footboys could run fastest, which caused such a shouting on the other side as was wonderful to hear."

Immediately after this ludicrous encounter, the peacefulness of Warwick Castle was invaded. "Some Special Passages from Warwickshire," 4th August, 1642, tell us that the King gave Warwick Castle to Lord Compton, a noted royalist, living in that picturesque mansion which the antiquary now loves to visit, so quiet, so sequestered, so redolent of the olden

* King's Pamphlets, Brit. Mus. Acts and Orders, vol. ii, p. 124.

time, bearing the name of Compton Wyneates, or Compton-in-the-Hole, not far from Edge-hill. Lord Brooke, of course, resisted this lawless disposal of his property by the infatuated Charles, and forthwith, says our informant, four great pieces of ordnance were planted in different parts of the castle, two at the gate, one on Cæsar's Tower, the other on the keep.

Still his lordship professed loyalty to the King, though opposing his usurped prerogatives; and he "made great preparations," says Thomas Johnsons, the writer of these Special Passages, "to receive him royally should he come in peace; if otherwise, I am afraid," adds this person, "we shall have a woful time of it, and so God, of his mercy, think upon us." Charles did not come, but the castle was besieged on the 7th August, and terminated in the discomfiture of the assailants.

On the 28th August, 1642, the Earl of Newcastle, and other noblemen, march to Warwick, where Brooke is lying with his new levies. He meets them coming from Grove-park, in a field, about a mile from the town. A trumpet from the lords demands a parley. They propose that he should lay down his arms, resign Warwick Castle to the King, disavow the ordinance of militia, endeavour the execution of the commission of array, deliver county magazine into the hands of Northampton, and make submission to his Majesty. Pardon is offered him on these conditions; and he is told, if he refuses, he may expect signal and instant punishment. We see the fire kindling in his noble countenance as the brave Lord Brooke replies to these modest propositions. "My lords, I much wonder that

men of judgment, in whose breasts true honour should hold her seat, should so much wrong their noble pedigree as to seek the ruin of those high and noble thoughts they should endeavour to support. Doth fond ambition or your self-willed pride so much bewitch you that you cannot see the crown of this your act? When the great council of the parliament was first assembled, you then were members, honourable members. Why did you not continue? Was it because your actions were so bad you were ashamed of them? Had you done evil in some petty kind, a better course might have quitted you from that, and you had been still more honoured, loved, and feared. As for these propositions, take this in answer. When that his Majesty, his posterity, and the peace of the kingdom, shall be secured from you, I shall gladly lay down my arms and power. As for the castle, it was delivered to my trust by the high court of parliament, who reserve it for the King's good use, and I dare boldly say will so employ it. As for the commission of the array, you know it is unlawful. For the magazine of the county, it was delivered to me also by the parliament, and, as a faithful servant to the country, I am resolved to continue it till Northampton can show me greater authority for the delivery of the same. As touching his Majesty's pardon, as I am confident I have not given any occasion of offence to his Majesty, so I need not his pardon, and I doubt not in a short time his Majesty will find who are his best friends. As for your fury, I wholly disdain it, and answer it but by hoping that Northampton may be translated to Warwick, to stand sentry upon Warwick Castle to

fright crows and kites.”* The lords had enough of it, and rode back to their party. Brooke returned to the castle.

Afterwards, Northampton approached the castle, while it was in the charge of Sir Edward Peto; Brooke being from home, the royalist general calls on him to surrender. He refuses. There is a pause of two hours, and then comes another summons, met by an indignant reply, “that surely the earl might have taken the soldier’s word at first.” Compton, Northampton’s son, begins an attack with a few guns, upon which Sir Edward sends out a trumpeter into the town, bidding all friends leave it instantly, and, “as for the rest, let them take care of themselves.” The red flag of defiance waves over Guy’s tower. The fire of the enemy is returned. The garrison have little ordnance, but plenty of ammunition, and more courage, and are prepared to fight it out. The enemy plant cannon on the church tower, but are dislodged by shots from the castle. Then the besiegers try to starve out the garrison. Sir Edward undauntedly hoists a flag-staff, with a Bible and winding-sheet. These heroes are prepared to die for what they deem the cause of their country and the Bible. Nothing is to be gained by beleaguering such a stronghold, and therefore Northampton gives it up in despair.†

Matters were now brought to an extremity, and the flame of the civil war burst out with violence in the following October. The battle of Edge Hill was fought on the 23rd. The King moved on towards London; Prince Rupert scoured the suburbs. The

* Nugent’s *Life of Hampden*, ii. 224.

† *Ibid.*, ii. 249.

city was alarmed. On the 8th November the Lord Mayor called a meeting at Guildhall. A vast concourse assembled; and among the speakers was Lord Brooke. He was, perhaps, at the time at Brooke House, Clapton, his residence when in London; and having his heart in the parliament cause, he proceeds to the great city meeting, to arouse and cheer the somewhat depressed spirits of the people by his warm patriotic eloquence. The echo of his speech has not quite died away, like so many of the orations that have rung round those ancient walls. After a very confused and incorrect account of the battle of Edge Hill, respecting which the most contradictory reports prevailed, the noble orator exhorts the citizens of London to rally round the parliament cause, and stand up for the defence of their liberties. "When you shall hear the drums beat," he exclaims, "(for it is resolved the drums shall beat to-morrow,) say not, I beseech you, 'I am not of the trained band,' nor this, nor that, nor the other; but doubt not to go out to the work, and fight courageously, and this shall be the day of your deliverance." Brooke was a man of deeds as well as words; and a few days afterwards we find him, with his illustrious friend Hampden, together with Hollis, resisting the royal army, and preventing their march onwards to the metropolis.

In the deep winter we find him preparing for the fresh hostilities he foresaw.* The memorial of a scene at Warwick Castle, connected with his preparation for defending his country, is preserved among the pamphlets of the time, dated February 26th, 1643, and

* See Note [17].

entitled "Lord Brooke's Speech at the Election of Captains and Commanders at Warwick Castle." On reading the pamphlet, one sees some of the leading and trusty citizens of Warwick, with several of the neighbouring gentry, on a cold winter's morning, the snow on the ground perhaps, marching up towards the castle-gate, passing under the archway, and drawn up together in the quadrangle, or in the noble baronial hall, to listen to the harangue of their brave colonel. With earnest countenances, they listen, while, in an earnest tone, he addresses these companions in arms. "Since we are forced, for the safeguard of ourselves, the preservation of our liberties, the defence of God's true religion (invaded by the practices of Popish malignants), to become actors, I doubt not but each of you will play your part with that noble resolution and Christian courage which the greatness and meritoriousness of the work doth challenge. 'No man is born for his own use only,' saith that great commonwealthsman of the Romans, Cicero: his friends and countrymen claim an equal share in his abilities, as your friends, your country, nay, your religion, and God himself, demands of you. I need not demonstrate what it is you are to fight for—your wives, children, substance, lives, liberties, and that which is more precious, the testimony of good consciences." His lordship then reviews the conduct of the Popish malignants, plainly indicating that he looked on them as enemies to their country; as political traitors; as disturbers of the peace; not merely as erroneous religionists.

"The going against the King," he proceeds to observe, "may stagger some resolutions: I shall, there-

fore, easily disabuse you from these vain surmises and uncertain imaginations. It is for the King we fight; to keep a crown for our King; a kingdom for our sovereign and posterity; to maintain his own rights and privileges, which are relative with the people's liberties." Brooke here shows that, like others of the early leaders of the parliamentary party, he was not a foe to monarchical dominion, but only to the unconstitutional extension of regal prerogatives.

Once more our hero glides into warm denunciations of the Papists, whom he accuses of foreign and domestic treachery, and holds up to special indignation the Gunpowder Plot and the Spanish Armada as proofs of Papal malignity.

Returning to the main purpose of his address, he thanks the new comers, and reminds them their fighting is not to be for spoil and money. They were not mercenaries, but patriots: disinterested zeal for their country's liberties was the soul of their enterprise. Alluding to those who would neither contribute to the cause, nor fight for it, yet looked to be defended and kept from violence, he asks, with some excitement, "Why should men stand and only look on as ciphers? what protection can they expect?" To which interrogatory the brave commanders, who had left their peaceful homes, and embarked all in this stern fight for freedom, would murmur—"None!"

This somewhat rambling, but patriotic, earnest-minded, noble-hearted address, ends with a solemn prayer. Lifting up his eyes to heaven, while the captains and commanders would unite in the attitude of devotion, and not a few, perhaps, in its true spirit,

Brooke implores that God Almighty will arise and maintain His own cause, scattering and confounding the devices of His enemies, not suffering the ungodly to prevail over His poor innocent flock. "Lord, we are but a handful in consideration of Thine and our enemies: therefore, O Lord, fight thou our battle; go, as Thou didst in the time of King David, before the hosts of Thy servants, and strengthen, and give us hearts, that we may show ourselves men for the defence of Thy true religion, and our own, and the King and kingdom's safety." These were not words of form, uttered thoughtlessly, or in hypocritical pretence, as internal evidence bears witness, but the breathing forth of a devout soul, which realized the presence of the Almighty, which felt that without Him man can do nothing, and therefore committed, with unfaltering faith, the cause of religion and liberty to His care. Lord Brooke was well known to be a man of prayer. The secret wrestlings of his soul with God in the closet were witnessed only by that Blessed One; but his devotions in his family, where he was wont to pray in the presence of his chaplains, much to the offence of the High Church party, had edified many, and convinced them that they were listening to one who had prepared for these social exercises by the culture of private communion with his Maker.

This scene in Warwick Castle in February was immediately followed by active service. Lord Brooke, at the head of his volunteers, commences his campaign. Was it with any forebodings of what was so soon to happen that he took leave of his noble lady, and rode under the feudal gateway of that old fortress for almost

the last time? A pamphlet—one of the newspapers of the day—traces the proceedings of Lord Brooke and his troops during this eventful week. The carriages and ammunition come to Northampton on Tuesday: that night Lord Brooke advances to Coventry, leaving part of his men at Northampton. On the way, he sends a party of horse to Sir Thomas Cave's house, *strictly countermanding all plunder*, which injunction is so rigorously adhered to that the only complaint made is, that Captain Brown's cornet took a little parcel of money from a woman, for which the cornet is forthwith cashiered. His lordship arrives at Coventry on Wednesday, and sends twenty dragoons to disturb the enemy at Stratford. He marches to Warwick on Friday night; then to Stratford. The enemy is met near the town: Brooke's men put them to flight, and pursue them as fast "as the ploughed lands, softened by rain, will permit."

Barrels of gunpowder had been artfully laid under the Town Hall at Stratford by the royalist party, evidently with the intention of blowing up Lord Brooke and his council of officers, who, it was expected, were about to assemble there; but the plot failed. The powder was indeed fired, the building destroyed, and an officer named Hunt wounded; but his lordship, and the rest of the party, not having met in the place, escaped the effects of their enemies' malignity. Yet, with all this provocation, Brooke manifested that forbearance which seems to have been characteristic of the man, and strictly commanded his soldiers not to offer any violence, or plunder the town. So punctilious were the men in attending to the injunctions of

their commander, and so scrupulously exact is the person who relates the circumstances of the affair, that he mentions a major who took an old gown to watch in, "but it was re-delivered."* There can be no doubt that the honest principle and the steady demeanour of many of the parliamentary soldiers, compared with the Cavaliers, when quartered in any town, tended greatly to promote the interests of their cause with the people. The conduct of the most moderate of them in such matters was, however, as every one knows, associated with a lion-like courage in the field. Their enemies often taunted them with religious enthusiasm; and Marchamont Needham said jeeringly of Cromwell, "He is gone in the might of the Spirit, with all his train of disciples, every one of whom is, as David, a man of war and a prophet; gifted men all, who resolve to their work better than any of the sons of Levi, and run quite through Wales with their two-edged swords to convert the Gentiles."† But, truly, these jesters had small cause to laugh, when they met the men whom they had mocked foot to foot in the death-struggle: they found them indeed like David's followers, "fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains."

The paper containing the account of the proceedings at Warwick Castle is dated the 1st of March.‡ On the following day the earthly career of the hero, whose exploits it celebrates, for ever closed. Lord Brooke was at Lichfield, and had just recovered the


* See Note [18].

† Harris's *Life of Cromwell*, 81.

‡ See Note [19.]

city from the royalist troops. They had fled for refuge to the cathedral close, which they had converted into a place of entrenchment. On the 2nd of March, the festival of St. Chad, to whom the magnificent cathedral was dedicated, the gallant soldier prepared for an assault upon the enemy. He was standing under the porch of a small house, and was directing a battery on the east gate of the close, when a gentleman of the Dyott family, standing on one of the towers of the cathedral, aimed a musket at the unsuspecting nobleman, and killed him on the spot. His unimpeachable character, inflexible opposition to all tyranny in Church and State, warlike skill and courage, and great popularity with his own party, rendered him peculiarly obnoxious to the adherents of Charles, and it was therefore to them an object of anxious desire to be rid of their formidable adversary. The treacherous plot at Stratford failed, but the expert marksman on Lichfield Cathedral succeeded. The death of Lord Brooke created a great sensation.

The royalist party sought to blacken the fair fame of Lord Brooke, in which attempt they have been followed by a large class of writers. For him to assault a cathedral close was represented as an act of awful profanity; though it may be difficult to distinguish between his conduct in this respect, and the conduct of his adversaries, who had previously invaded the sacred precincts by turning them into a garrison. That the death of Brooke should happen at Lichfield on the day of the patron saint, whose cathedral walls he had dared to beleaguer, was too striking a coincidence to escape the comments of superstitious persons among his ene-



mies. It was a judgment on this impious Puritan, they exclaimed. The tidings of the event reached poor Archbishop Laud, then immured in the Tower of London; and it was some small relief to the mind of that infatuated prelate, to hear of the death of one whom he had found so very decided an opponent in the House of Lords. He regarded his removal as a Divine judgment, in which opinion he was followed by others. Dr. South so interprets the event; and adds the idle story, that the man who shot the bullet was deaf and dumb, and that Brooke that morning begged of the Almighty to give him a token of his favour or disapprobation; which statement the preacher concludes with a heartless jest, regardless alike of the dignity of the pulpit and the spirit of Christianity,—“As he asked of God a sign, so God gave him one, signing him in the forehead, and that with such a mark as he is like to be known by to all posterity.”*

The practice of interpreting every calamity which befell a foe as a Divine judgment, and every success that crowned their own efforts as a Divine sanction, was but too common in those unhappy times with both parties; nor is the practice altogether discontinued, though one would hope it is diminished, at the present day. Surely no person free from the influence of passion and prejudice can examine our Lord's words, “Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay,”—and not come to the conclusion that the events which happen to men in this mortal life are most fallacious signs by which to judge of the Divine

* South's Sermons, vol. i. p. 185.

estimate of their character. Nor can any one carefully reflect upon the Divine government, as seen in the present treatment of the human race, without being convinced that the present dispensation is one of moral trial, not of rewards and punishments; that here below the same events happen to all, and that the allotment of human destiny, according to religious character, is reserved for a future state of existence. The application of superstitious views of providence to passing events would, in many cases, lead to the most contradictory results, and exhibit the Deity as approving the most opposite courses of proceeding. During the civil wars, as in more recent instances, the victorious army claimed the Almighty on their side, though the vanquished were by no means ready to construe their own defeat as any sign of Divine disapprobation. The omens of Providence, when prosperous, were graciously significant; when adverse, they lost their meaning. Such rash interpretations of the Divine counsels can have no other effect than to dishonour the Supreme Being, and to bring discredit on His holy word; they ought, therefore, to be most carefully avoided by short-sighted mortals.

Notwithstanding the speculations on the death of Lord Brooke, there were persons politically opposed to him who felt compelled to admit his virtues. Clarendon confesses the kindness of his nature and the integrity of his principles as being apparent to all who were acquainted with him; and he bears testimony to the firmness of his character, though he considers that he was "seduced and corrupted in his understanding." The latter remark, so natural for the royalist historian

to make, will be deemed by the impartial reader as detracting nothing from the previous admission relative to the moral excellence of this noble Puritan.

Lord Brooke was certainly one of the brightest ornaments of the party to which he belonged. No charge has been brought against him, even by his enemies, save that he was enthusiastically attached to the cause he had espoused. His incorruptible integrity, firmness of purpose, ability in counsel, and bravery in war, are attested by the most unfriendly authorities; his benevolent regard for the lives and property of the persons against whom a sense of duty compelled him to draw his sword, is proved from the recorded actions of his brief campaign; his disinterested patriotism, in venturing his all for the good of his country, is beyond any reasonable question; while the strength of his mind, the cultivation of his understanding, the depth and comprehensiveness of his views of Christianity, the purity and elevation of his spiritual feelings, and the catholic temper of his soul, must be apparent to all who have read his productions. He is worthy of being classed with his friend Hampden; and it is not a little remarkable that two such illustrious patriots should have fallen at the very commencement of the strife; that Falkland, too, a most admirable character, attached to the opposite party, and doubtless from the purest motives, should also have been slain at so early a period in the conflict. What their prolonged lives might have effected, it is impossible to conjecture; how far they might have had any power to heal the wounds of their bleeding country, no one can determine: but that the loss which England sustained in the fall of the

flower of her sons was very great, no one can deny; while, however, there is most gratifying reason to believe that to their spirits the change was eternal gain.

With reverence we inscribe the name of Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, on the roll of Puritan and Nonconforming heroes. And now farewell, thou wise and gentle spirit; for with all thine ardour thou wast wise, with all thy valour, gentle! No calumnies or suspicions can reach thee in that everlasting rest, whither I doubt not thou didst ascend from the troubled scenes of thy unhappy country, and where now thy presence, together with that of Pym and Hampden, adds to the pleasure of him who has written so beautifully of that rest, and who anticipated his meeting with thee there, in words which the bigotry of others, not any change in his own convictions, tempted him to blot.*

* See Note [20].

CHAPTER VI.

THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

“Great men have been amongst us,—hands that penned
And tongues that uttered wisdom.”

WORDSWORTH.

IN our last chapter, the reader was conducted to Warwick Castle, that proud relic of a feudal age, which, since the days of Lord Brooke, has retained some associations unwont to haunt such edifices. Another building of a later date, rich in objects interesting to the architect, the antiquary, and the poet, is connected with our present chapter. Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster is a magnificent specimen of the last period of mediæval church architecture in England. The art had passed through its spring-tide bloom and summer glory; and if, at the latter part of the fifteenth century, it gave signs of autumnal decay, in that decay, as in the appearance of the trees in October, there were tints of peculiar beauty. As one looks upon this edifice, with its panelled walls and airy pinnacles, it is impossible not to agree with a tasteful critic in such matters, who observes, “It would seem as though the architect had

intended to give to stone the character of embroidery, and enclose the walls in meshes of network." The vaulted roof, springing from the clustered pillars in the walls, like branches of lofty trees interlaced together, forming a rich canopy of leaves, with the gorgeously bossed pendants piercing through, like gracefully-drooping stalactites, or like the spider's web, covered with hoar-frost, must be acknowledged by every one who has a spark of taste to be an exquisite triumph of artistic skill. Nor can the *tout ensemble* of the edifice fail to strike such a person as an embodiment of conceptions redolent of genius and the muse; to make him feel that poetry is not confined to words, to paper books, and parchment rolls; that it can be graven with the chisel as well as written with the pen, and that a great architect is a great poet.

But while that and kindred structures appeal to the eye of refined taste as monuments of consummate genius and skill, the associations connected with the early history of these edifices, and their purposes in connection with the Papal religion, appeal to the heart of reformed piety as the sad memorials of superstition. These poems in stone, as they have been appropriately called, relate a mournful story when so regarded; and the fretwork, elaborately spread over the cold walls and roof, become no unapt symbol of that ingeniously wrought system of perverted religion which over-arched society through the mediæval age, and has been fitly termed "a petrification of Christianity." Many a one, when pacing those dim aisles, has felt a struggle in his breast between the emotions of taste and the sentiments of a pure and elevated faith; the charms of

artistic beauty and sublimity have been weakened, if not dispelled, by the affecting remembrance of the ecclesiastical despotism which, by means like these among others, for so many centuries held captive the minds of our forefathers.

Henry the Seventh's Chapel was only for a little while the scene of Papal worship; nor has it seen much of the pageantry of feudal knighthood, though in the reign of James the First the Order of the Bath there held their grand inaugurations: yet might it be deemed commemorative of the old system of things, both in religious and civil society,—a sign of the Roman Church, a sign of mediæval chivalry.

On the 1st of July, 1643, an unprecedented clerical assembly gathered within those walls. They came not to worship after the manner of those who had formerly trod that pavement. No bishop's rochet, no priestly alb, no deacon's dalmatic, not even an Anglican surplice, was to be seen on any one of them. They were attired in plain black cloaks and bands, in imitation of the foreign Protestants. Through "the great gates of brass," which, as Washington Irving says, "are richly and delicately wrought, and turn heavily upon their hinges, as if proudly reluctant to admit the feet of common mortals into this most gorgeous of sepulchres," did sixty-nine of these worthies, with a sprinkling of laymen, differently attired, pass to take their places in that gothic fane; and one fancies, if the gates could sympathize with those who hung them, they turned on their hinges that morning more reluctantly than ever. The Assembly had come there, first, to worship, according to Presbyterian order; and then, by the sanc-

tion, and indeed by the appointment of the High Court of Parliament, to confer on matters of high import, with a view to the promotion of the peace, unity, and welfare of England's distracted realm. The Houses of Lords and Commons joined these divines with their lay assessors. The knights' stalls were filled; all the benches were crowded. Extemporary prayer was then solemnly offered to God, and Dr. Twiss preached a sermon, to which the congregation reverently listened. The scene marked an era, not only in the history of that chapel and abbey, but in the history of the nation. The presence of these men, and the purpose for which they met, betokened the change that had come over things, temporal and spiritual, in old England. It was plain that the age of a feudal aristocracy was gone, and that the power of the Commons had gained the ascendant; that Popery and Prelacy had retired before the growing influence of Puritan heroism. The building remained the symbol of a past era. The assembly within it were the authors and the types of a new one. The past and the present were there in contrast: in other places they were in those days involved in fierce and sanguinary conflict. The battle of the commonwealth was a stern fight between men, on the one hand, in whose bosoms lingered the spirit of the old civilization, religious and secular, and men, on the other hand, in whose hearts rose the spirit of a new and better civilization in both forms. The grave worthies in black, probably, for the most part, had little regard for the artistic beauties of the place where they were met; stern indignation, at the thought of the corrupt worship once conducted there, was perhaps

the feeling uppermost in their minds as they looked around them. This temple of Prelacy was covered with gloomy associations in their minds. It was identified with a system under which they and their ancestors had been oppressed and persecuted. They thought of Laud, of the Star Chamber and High Commission Court, of the cropping of ears, and the slitting of noses, and the confiscation of goods; very sad remembrances indeed, and giving to their countenances a grave and solemn expression, which all the gorgeousness of gothic architecture could not subdue. Who they were the reader need not be told. He will recognise at once the *Westminster Assembly of Divines*.

They met not to legislate on the affairs of the Church, but simply to confer and give their opinion on points to be submitted by Parliament; and it is proper in addition to state, that they were not persons chosen by the Clergy, or other members of the Church as their representatives, but individuals selected from various parts of the country, according to the will and pleasure of the Parliament who convened them,—so that they cannot be considered as an ecclesiastical council, but merely a committee of advice to assist the Lords and Commons in the settlement of religious matters. The character of this Assembly has been shamefully misrepresented. Clarendon charges some of the members with being infamous in their lives and conversation, and most of them as of mean parts and learning; and even Milton has aspersed this Convention, declaring that it was eminent neither for piety nor knowledge. But both these writers were prejudiced witnesses,—Clarendon being the enemy of Puritanism, and Milton

being grievously offended with the Assembly, because some of the members had denounced his book on the doctrine and discipline of divorce. To the testimony of Clarendon may be triumphantly opposed that of Baxter, who was far better acquainted with the characters of the men, and who reviews each of the parties in the Assembly with manifest and characteristic impartiality. "The divines there congregated," he says, "were men of eminent learning, godliness, ministerial abilities, fidelity; and being not worthy to be one of them myself, I may the more freely speak the truth, even in the face of malice and envy, that as far as I am able to judge, by the information of all history of that kind, and by any other evidence left us, the Christian world, since the days of the Apostles, had never a synod of more excellent divines than this and the Synod of Dort."* From Milton, after some of the Assembly had condemned his book, we may make an appeal to Milton before they had incensed him, and then we shall find him pronouncing this same Assembly "a learned and memorable synod, in which piety, learning, and prudence were housed." Against the allegations of both these accusers, we may place the conclusion formed by a modern historian, well able to judge in such a matter, and being by no means biassed in favour of the Puritans. Mr. Hallam describes the Assembly "as equal in learning, good sense, and other merits, to any Lower House of Convocation that ever made a figure in England."†

Surely no impartial person who has ever heard of the learning of Lightfoot, Selden, and Goodwin, can

* Baxter's Life and Times, p. 193. † Hallam, vol. i. p. 609.

impeach as ignorant an assembly of which they were ornaments; and many of whose members they found competent to discuss with them questions of profound Biblical erudition: nor will any one who is acquainted with Puritan biography, on looking over the list of worthies assembled at Westminster, in which he will recognise the names of many celebrated for their ardent piety, think meanly of the moral and religious character of an ecclesiastical synod to which they were willing to belong. And, further, it should be remembered by those who are prejudiced against everything connected with Dissent, that, for the most part, the men who met at Westminster were not Dissenters, but sons of the Church, the alumni of Oxford and Cambridge,—men who had enjoyed the advantage of a University education, and were still members of the Establishment, though their views of Church polity had gradually undergone a change, which had brought them to a conclusion far distant from Episcopacy.

By far the greater number of the Assembly were Presbyterians,—men who believed that Elders, clerical and lay, were the only divinely-appointed rulers in Christ's Church; that synods, general and provincial, were the only ecclesiastical courts of Divine appointment.

The spiritual lineage of these men is to be traced directly to the Puritans of Elizabeth's time. Those Puritans, justly regarding Christianity as a religion of spirituality, not of forms—of simplicity, not of pomp—had at first objected mainly to certain points in the Church of England ritual; but when they saw Bishops identifying themselves with these things, and enforcing

them by their authority, they were led to take another step, and to look at the foundations of diocesan episcopacy itself. The first Reformers had not attempted to base the institution upon Scripture. Cranmer had acknowledged "the Bishops and priests were at one time, and were no two things, but both one office in the beginning of Christ's religion." * Expediency and custom, therefore, were the only pillars left; but the Puritans, seeing nothing very expedient in the custom, and identifying it with corruptions in Christianity, came by degrees to repudiate the institution. Their cause assumed a decidedly antiepiscopal character. Their followers advanced still further, and began an aggressive attack on Bishops' thrones and Bishops' courts. "Black Prelacy" became to them an object of intense abhorrence; nor could they rest till they had accomplished its overthrow. No small number of the Westminster divines were animated by such sentiments as they ascended the steps of Henry the Seventh's Chapel.

But many of these enemies of Papistry and the Prelates were themselves, in some measure, imbued with one of the fatal errors which lay at the basis of the two systems of intolerance they opposed. From the time of Cyprian the grand idea of one visible organized Catholic Church had prevailed in Christendom; outward uniformity was mistaken for inward unity. The notion of a spiritual fellowship was sacrificed to the imposing conception of one government, polity, and worship. Like Cyprian, many longed for union—longed to see the Church standing before the world a

* Burnet's History of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 223.

manifest brotherhood; their active fancy regaled itself with the beautiful vision,—their warm hearts panted for the realization of the idea. But they, like the Bishop of Carthage, confounded the outward with the inward—the material with the spiritual—the form with the substance. When the sword of civil power passed from the hand of the heathen to the hand of the Christian ruler, it was thought right to employ it in the enforcement of such uniformity. Creeds and canons came to be a sort of thing like the bed of the old robber Procrustes, who used to tie travellers to its iron framework; and if their stature exceeded the length of that rough couch, then their limbs must be lopped off; if it was too short, then they must be submitted to the rack, that they might be stretched to the required length. When once the passion for uniformity has taken hold of the mind, and the civil power is deemed a fitting instrument for ecclesiastical purposes, the establishment of Inquisitions and Star Chambers, with all their paraphernalia of cruelty, follows as a necessary consequence. Many of the brethren at Westminster were smitten with the love of formal unity. They were for one Church throughout the empire; and though they shrunk from the sort of atrocities which had been perpetrated by Papists and Episcopalians, they were prepared to employ coercive measures to some extent in support of their own creed.

Within a month after the opening of the Westminster Assembly, two of the clerical members, Mr. Marshall and Mr. Nye, together with the Earl of Rutland, Sir William Armyne, Sir Harry Vane, Mr. Hatcher, and Mr. Darley, were despatched by the Parliament to

confer with the Church of Scotland, respecting the union of the Protestant parties in the two countries, and to seek the assistance of the Scotch army in the civil war. Arrived in Edinburgh, they were kindly received by the General Assembly, which had just commenced its sittings. They landed on the picturesque old quay at Leith. "The lords went and conveyed them up in a coach." "A committee was appointed to salute and welcome them." Arrangements were made for their visiting the Assembly. The English commissioners presented, in addition to their credentials and other documents, a letter, subscribed by above seventy of their divines, supplicating help from their Scotch brethren. The letter was so plaintive it drew tears from many eyes. Then came the question—How should union between the two kingdoms be cemented? The English preferred a civil league—the Scotch a religious covenant. The matter was long and gravely debated. Sir Harry Vane and Mr. Nye belonged to the liberal party, and were averse to the rigid uniformity advocated by the Presbyterians. But the latter prevailed, and their success procured the adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant. It was called a *league* to meet the wishes of Sir Harry Vane, who did not approve of its religious aspect, and a *covenant* for the satisfaction of those who chiefly valued its ecclesiastical character and bearing. It consisted of six articles, pledging those who took it to preserve the established religion of Scotland, and endeavour to bring the Church of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity possible; to aim at the extirpation of

Popery, Prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; to preserve the privileges of parliament and the liberties of the kingdom; to search out malignants; to promote peace; and to defend those who enter into the League and Covenant. With immense ardour was the engagement entered into by the Scotch: they venerated and loved these symbols of confederation. The duty of swearing this solemn oath was earnestly enforced. Heavy penalties were threatened against those who should refuse. The Covenant passed from city to city, from town to town, from village to village. It gathered to it the men of the plain and the mountain. It was like the fiery cross which summoned the clansmen to rally round their chieftain's banner:—

“ O'er dale and hill the summons flew,
Nor rest nor pause the herald knew;
Not faster o'er thy heathery braes,
Balquidder, speeds the midnight blaze,
Rushing in conflagration strong
Thy deep ravines and dells along:
Each valley, each sequestered glen,
Muster'd its little horde of men,
That met as torrents from the height
In Highland dales their streams unite,
Still gathering as they pour along
A voice more loud, a tide more strong.”

Scotland put forth its strength on behalf of the Covenant; and soon after it had passed the General Assembly, the English commissioners returned to procure the adhesion of the people of this country. The instrument met with decided approbation from the Presbyterian party in England. It was confirmed by a vote of the House of Commons, and immediately afterwards passed

the Lords. But the mayor and city council petitioned against it; and some of the royalists stirred up a mob of women to come to the doors of both Houses to cry for peace on any terms. So fierce was the tumult that it could not be quelled without loss of life.

The Westminster Assembly met on the 25th of September, 1643, in St. Margaret's Church,—a building almost lost in the shadow of the magnificent Abbey of St. Peter, yet one interesting, not only in itself, but on this, among other accounts, that within its walls the senators of England have been wont to gather for religious worship, and to listen to Christian instruction and warning. On the day now mentioned there was a large congregation. Both Houses of Parliament, the Scotch Commissioners, the Assembly of Divines, were all there. Good Mr. White, of Dorchester, commenced the service with prayer. The famous Mr. Henderson, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, who had come to attend the Assembly, continued the devotions. After which, Philip Nye, the Rector of Kimbolton, descanted at length, and with great earnestness, on the Covenant, commending it as a measure which was likely to prove a defence against Popery and Prelacy; and a stimulus to other reformed Churches to seek further reformation.* Mr. Henderson followed him, and detailed the deliverance of Scotland, through the good providence of God, from the monstrous dominion and gigantic greatness of Prelacy; and proceeded to speak of the small beginning and the successful accomplishment of their enterprise; of the purity of their intentions; and of the manifest blessing

* Hanbury's Memorials, vol. ii. p. 216.

of heaven on their efforts.* Mr. Nye then read the Covenant, article by article; when the Assembly rose, and, in that spirit of deep solemnity with which the Puritans ever did such things, lifted up their right hands to heaven, worshipping the great name of God, and swearing before him to perform their vow. Dr. Gouge concluded with prayer; after which the House of Commons and the Assembly repaired to the chancel, and appended their names to the venerable document.

That scene in the Church of St. Margaret has in it an element of true sublimity. The Presbyterian heroes there swore enmity to formalism, superstition, and disorder. They were men thoroughly in earnest; enthusiasts some of them might be, but not hypocrites. They felt they were in God's presence; that they were walking "on the sides of eternity," and that they had a great duty to discharge. Two objects were before them—the Church's unity, and the Church's spirituality: these they diligently, earnestly, devoutly sought,—fancied that they were in the way that led to them, but, alas! missed the path.

Instructions were given "for the taking of the Covenant throughout the kingdom, the manner of taking it to be thus:—The minister to read the whole Covenant distinctly and audibly in the pulpit, and during the time of the reading thereof the whole congregation to be uncovered; and at the end of his reading thereof, all to take it standing, lifting up their right hands bare; and then afterwards to subscribe it severally, by writing their names (or their marks, to

* McCrie's *Life of Henderson*, p. 45.

which their names are to be added,) in a parchment roll—a book, whereinto the Covenant is to be inserted, purposely provided for that end, and kept as a record in the parish.” Copies of the Covenant, with a long array of names appended, according to the Parliament’s order, sometimes present themselves, when the antiquary is turning over the papers of old corporations, or searching into the archives of a parish; and as the eye passes over the time-worn parchment, or the frail, discoloured paper, it catches a glimpse of the solemn scene once enacted in many an English church. All young ministers, we are informed by Neal, were requested to take the Covenant at their ordination. None of the laity were continued in any office of trust, civil or military, who refused it. At the close of the war, those who had opposed the Parliament were subject to the same thing before they were admitted to compensation.*

While prepared to do justice to the motives of those who framed and enforced this League and Covenant, we cannot but regard it as an act of uniformity akin in principle to the very measures under which the Puritans had recently groaned, and which, twenty years afterwards, were to be revived, to the terror of conscientious minds and the rending asunder of the English Church. The Presbyterians were inflicting on Prelatists evils such as Prelatists had before inflicted upon them, and which after the Restoration the latter did not fail to retaliate with tenfold vengeance. Episcopacy had now its confessors, among whom were able and devoted men, worthy of far different treat-

* See Note [23].

ment from what they received; though, looking at the ecclesiastical history of the previous years, the rough usage they experienced is more calculated to excite regret than surprise. Good Bishop Hall, of Norwich, met indeed with "Hard Measure" from the hands of the Parliament and the soldiers, as appears from his pamphlet bearing that title; but it should be remembered that the former were not responsible for the excesses of violence into which the latter rushed in carrying their orders into execution.

But to return to the Covenant; some who took it were far from sympathizing with the Presbyterian party. Sir Harry Vane had objected to its religious character. He advocated a civil league; and when some one charged him with making frivolous distinctions, he replied,—“You are mistaken, and do not see enough into the matter; for a league shows it is between two nations, and may be broken upon just reasons, but not a covenant.” In the articles of the Covenant relating to uniformity, the words were “according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches.” Vane was for leaving out the last clause, remarking to the same person, “that Church government according to the Word of God, by the difference of divines and expositors, would be long enough before it be determined, for the learned held it clearly for Episcopacy, so that when all are agreed we may take in the Scotch Presbytery.” This kind of argument savours much more of the statesman, if not of the Jesuit, than the honest Christian. Vane was certainly a friend to toleration, and intended by the plan he adopted to effect “a saving retreat for its sup-

porters;" but though the end was good, it did not sanctify the means.

Philip Nye was a prominent person in taking the Covenant, and urging it upon others. Yet Nye was an Independent. Some say he was guided by expediency in this affair. Had such been the case, it would have exposed Nye, much as we may admire his subsequent advocacy of toleration, to the charge of disingenuousness. But it may be questioned whether this were the case. His admiration of the Covenant seems to have been sincere. With much earnestness, he urged it upon the Assembly. He looked on it as a bond chiefly leaguering them together in opposition to Popery and Prelacy, which he deemed enemies to the liberties of the commonwealth, as well as the purity of the Church. Though by most persons the terms of the Covenant would be construed as binding the parties who took it to promote Presbyterianism, yet there was sufficient ambiguity in the words employed to admit of that sense being evaded by a dexterous criticism. Like all other religious articles prepared for subscription, the Covenant was taken by the parties who signed it according to their own interpretation. Episcopalians as well as Independents put their names to the instrument, no doubt adopting some "unnatural sense" in the explanation of its contents. Certainly the whole proceeding showed the futility and folly of such subscription. Nye probably regarded that part which relates to uniformity as meaning uniformity so far as it was practicable; while he felt that his Independency would not interfere with spiritual union, and prevent him from living with his brethren in faith and

love. As to the question of toleration in general, it is likely that Nye and others had not such clear conceptions on the subject at first as they had some short time afterwards, when they had been led to reflect and argue upon the point by the opposition they met with from the Presbyterian party. A broad view, and a clear enunciation of the principle of religious liberty, like other great principles, comes out only as the result of much debating with adversaries—much reasoning with oneself.

Whatever might be Nye's motive in espousing the cause of the Covenant, it certainly was not the fear of man, for a bolder spirit has rarely trod the earth; and whatever the course of inquiry might be through which he passed, he certainly attained enlarged views of religious liberty, and announced it with a firmness which not a little confounded the Westminster Assembly.

"The five dissenting brethren," as they were called, were distinguished and active members of the Assembly. They were the steady advocates of Independency, and numbered about five or seven beside themselves of the same sentiments. They were men who had taken up the cause for which Barrowe and his associates suffered, and the pilgrim fathers were exiled; for which Robinson preached, and Lord Brooke pleaded; and in whose service, with humble zeal, the little Church in Southwark had lifted up its banner.

Jeremiah Burroughs—educated at Cambridge—forced to quit the University on account of his Non-conformist opinions—driven to Rotterdam, whence he returned after the opening of the Long Parliament—a

man of candour, modesty, and moderation—one whose devotional works breathe a spirit of enlightened and persuasive piety, and whose gentle spirit, with all the firmness that sustained it, could not bear the rough beating of the times, so that he is said to have died heart-broken at the age of forty-seven—was one of Nye's companions in the Westminster Convocation; and, in the debates that were carried on, this excellent man enlightened the brethren by his clear intelligence, and disarmed, if he did not subdue, opponents by his loving spirit. If Nye was the Luther, Burroughs was the Melancthon of the party. Nye was bold as a lion; Burroughs gentle as a dove. The energy of the one was like the hurricane, sweeping all before it; the influence of the other was like the gentle falling of the snow-flake, or the spring shower. One was like John the Baptist; the other resembled the beloved disciple. Men of both classes were needed,—the “sturdy wood-cutter,” as Luther called himself, and “the gentle husbandman, sowing and watering,” as he styled Melancthon. William Bridge, once the minister of the old parish-church of St. George's, Tombland, Norwich, afterwards a refugee in Holland, but now one of the ministers of Great Yarmouth, a man who had a library well filled with fathers, schoolmen, critics, and other authors of worth, and was wont to rise at four o'clock, both winter and summer, to read them, may be remembered next among these worthies. Having himself suffered in the cause of truth and liberty, he stimulated others to the display of like heroism, exhorting his good people at Yarmouth in the following strain: —“Certainly, if God's charge be your charge, your

charge shall be his charge; and being so, you have his bond that they shall never want their daily bread. Wherefore, think on all these things; think on them for the present, and in the future, if such a condition fall: and the Lord give us understanding in all things." These were sentiments calculated to form heroic sufferers, and heroic soldiers; and they did both. Bridge was a firm Independent, yet no boisterous schismatic. He held the truth in love; and, when his own party had attained to power, befriended those who were of different opinions. We shall catch further glimpses of this great man hereafter. Sydrach Sympson, according to Neal, a meek and quiet divine, educated at Cambridge, but driven out of the Church by Archbishop Laud, a man of great learning, and equal piety and moderation, though silenced at one time by the Assembly because he differed from them on some matters of discipline, was a companion and fellow-labourer of the Independent band.* Last, but not least, was Dr. Thomas Goodwin, a divine of much celebrity, respecting whom it was recorded in the common register of the University of Cambridge, where he studied, "*in scriptis in re theologica quamplurimus orbi notus.*" His opinions on the five points were of the high Calvinistic school; but he did not fail to inculcate the practical lessons of Christianity, and was opposed to Antinomianism equally in theory and practice.† Such were the men who fought the early battles of Independency.

The divines at first, as we have seen, met in Henry the Seventh's Chapel. The coolness of that spacious

* Nonconf. Mem. vol. ii. p. 208.

† Neal, vol. iv. p. 206.

edifice was pleasant in the summer months; but when the winter cold came on, the Assembly adjourned to the Jerusalem Chamber, at the right-hand corner of the western front, whose plain-looking architecture was more in harmony with Puritans and their proceedings than the florid gothic of the chapel they had left. The chamber still remains much as it was when the divines met in theological combat there. The chimney-piece of cedar, curiously carved, in the style of James the First's reign, continues to span the old fireplace. The painted window, on the northern side, still transmits the coloured light; while pieces of arras, originally belonging to some other part of the abbey, adorn the walls. The reader may remember that this same place, according to the old chronicler Fabian and the poet Shakspeare, was the death scene of Henry the Fourth.

Romance and poetry have thus thrown their rainbow hues over that room; but far nobler associations are linked with it, when remembered as the place where the advocates of religious freedom stood and fought one of their earliest battles. The dying Harry, prevented from accomplishing his wished-for crusade in Palestine, is a picture of inconsiderable interest, compared with the scene of those five brave ones who stood up for the claims of God and the rights of man, and carried on a moral crusade against those who had usurped dominion over the Holy Land of conscience.

Baillie has given a perfect painting of the place and of the men. On both sides, he informs us, are stages of seats. At the uppermost end there is a chair, set on a frame, occupied by the prolocutor, Dr. Twiss.

Before him are two chairs, in which the assessors, Dr. Burgess and Mr. White, take their seats. Immediately before them is a long table, occupying the middle of the room, close to which sit Mr. Byfield and Mr. Rodborough, taking notes. A good fire blazes on the hearth, which the Scotchman speaks of as "a dainty thing" in London. Opposite the table, on the president's right hand, on the lowest of the three or four rows of forms, sit the Scotch Commissioners; among whom our artist, Professor Baillie, is conspicuous. Behind them are the members of Parliament deputed to the Assembly. On the left, running from the upper end of the room to the fireplace, and at the lower end, till they come round to the seats of the Scotchmen, are lines of forms, whereon the divines sit as they please, each, however, commonly keeping the same place. The Lords of Parliament, who now and then drop in, sit in chairs round the fire. Everything is done in great order, and each meeting is commenced and closed with prayer. Our president is far too quiet a man for the Scotch delegate. He is learned, but too bookish, unfit for action, and sits mute,—which one thinks a chairman ought to do; but Baillie wishes to see in the president more zeal on the side of Presbyterianism, and therefore prefers "our good friend, Dr. Burgess, a very active and sharp man, who supplies, as far as is decent, the prolocutor's place."*

Independency was the terror of Baillie and some others in the Assembly. With characteristic caution, he wished to stave off the great question for the present. He says, in a letter to a friend, dated December

* Baillie's Letters, &c. vol. ii. p. 108.

7th, 1643, "We purpose not to meddle in haste with it, till it please God to advance our *army, which we expect will much assist our arguments;*" a powerful auxiliary, no doubt, and one in which the Presbyterian champion seemed to have more confidence than in his own or his brethren's reasonings. Nye he disliked from the beginning, as a bold, dauntless man; but Goodwin, Burroughs, and Bridge, at an early period, he denominates "persons, as it seems yet, of grace and modesty." But soon coming storms began to lower; Goodwin troubled them so that, after long debates, the Presbyterians could not conclude as they wished. The Scotchmen sought to mollify him; spoke to him in private; invited him to dinner; and found him not an angry zealot, but a loving-hearted man. "We spent an afternoon with him very sweetly," says Baillie.

In the following February, he complains of the long weapons of the Independents, their debating everything that came within twenty miles of their quarters, and the quick-replies they gave to the divines and Parliament men on the other side. The handful of Independents soon found they had not fair play in the Assembly against such a host of Presbyterian advocates, and therefore addressed Parliament in an Apologetical Narration. Soon after the book came out, the Independents invited Baillie and his friends to dine with them; but as the Scotchmen had not then read the pamphlet, they made no reference to the subject. When Baillie perused the work, he was greatly annoyed by its contents, and spoke of it as "a sly and cunning petition for toleration, which withal lent two

bold wipes to all reformed Churches, as if imperfect in their reformation." But our opinion of the Narration must not be formed upon the evidence of an opponent. It was a very modest production, stating, with calmness, the principles of the Independent party, and touching, with some pathos, on their past sufferings.

Mr. Herle, who afterwards succeeded Dr. Twiss in the president's chair, admitted that the performance was peaceable, modest, and candid; and that the difference between the Presbyterian and Independent brethren was not so great as some conceived, and that it did "but ruffle the fringe, not in any way rend the garments of Christ." Yet a fierce onslaught was commenced upon their brethren by the sterner advocates of Presbyterianism, and a swarm of pamphlets, full of bitter invectives, issued from the press.

As the question of Presbyterian discipline came under discussion, the debates in the Assembly increased in energy, learning, and acuteness, as well as in prolixity. No person who has read Dr. Lightfoot's notes of the proceedings can deny the erudition and controversial acumen of the disputants on both sides; and all who have glanced over the lively pages of honest Baillie will admit that this battle for great principles was waged with sincerity and earnestness. A very important point of inquiry arose in the month of April, "Whether many Congregations should be under one Presbytery?" The Independents pressed to be heard on the negative side, and spent twenty long sittings in advocating their opinion. Dr. Goodwin was foremost in the debate, but the rest of the Dissenting brethren took their turns. The champions well acquitted them-

selves, their enemies being judges. "Truly, if the cause were good," wrote Professor Baillie, "the men have plenty of learning, wit, and eloquence, and, above all, boldness and stiffness to make it out; but when they have wearied themselves, and overwearied us all, we found the most they had to say against the Presbytery was but curious idle niceties. Every one of their arguments, when it had been pressed to the full in one whole session, and sometimes in two or three, was *voiced*, and found to be light unanimously by all but themselves." There can be little doubt of this. The reasoning of the Independents would of course be found wanting when weighed in the Presbyterian balance, and the majority of the Assembly would naturally consider their own votes an ample refutation of their adversaries' arguments. "They profess," says Baillie in another place, respecting the Independents, "to regard nothing at all what all the reformed or all the world say, if *their sayings be not backed with convincing Scripture or reason*. All human testimonies they declaim against as a Popish argument." The simplicity of our Scotch friend is perfectly amusing, as he thus insensibly glides into the position of a Papal advocate, and tacitly acknowledges the authority of general opinion in the Church; on the other hand, the firmness and consistency of these genuine Protestants is truly admirable, as they resolutely adhere to the only invincible method of argument by which the cause of the Reformation can be defended.

The Presbyterian form of Church government was fully submitted to the examination of the Assembly, and the Independents failed not to contest with energy

and skill what they conceived to be objectionable points in that scheme of ecclesiastical polity. But it was soon found that the controversy involved a more general question. The principles of Independency require of their advocates that they should be friends to unlimited religious toleration. Every one who holds those principles, if he be consistent, will advocate the allowance of perfect civil liberty to all men, whatever may be their theological tenets. If Christ's churches should be composed of those only who give credible proof of faith in Christ,—if these churches are to regard their own members as the only parties coming within the range of their ecclesiastical discipline,—if they are to be communities standing apart from all political alliances, and even independent of each other in their organization,—and these are the principles of Independency,—then it follows that no ecclesiastical authority can touch those who are without; that no civil penalties are to be inflicted for religious offences upon any persons whatever, whether without or within; and that a political toleration is to be conceded to religionists of every class, and to men of no religion at all. These principles put no bar in the way of civil punishment for civil offences. They do not cross the path of the secular magistrate in his appropriate province, but they place beyond the reach of his jurisdiction offenders against religion only, and leave them to be dealt with by a higher authority. An impartial testimony on this matter is borne by Mr. Hallam:—“It is certain that the Congregational scheme leads to toleration, as the National Church scheme is adverse to it, for manifold reasons, which the reader will dis-

cover." * That many persons who held Independent principles did not see clearly the entire bearing of their own opinions, may be admitted, and hence the limit they put to the exercise of toleration; but it is certain that there were some among them who maintained publicly, with great intelligence and in a fearless spirit, the right of every man to unshackled freedom in his religious profession. In a pamphlet written in 1644,† it is remarked, "If security may be taken by the wisdom of the State for civil subjection, why may not even Papists themselves enjoy toleration?" And in a tract supposed to be written by John Goodwin, a famous Independent, to whom Baillie refers with evident horror, occurs the memorable sentence, that "by God's command the magistrate is discharged to put the least discourtesy on any man, Turk, Jew, Papist, Socinian, or whatever, for his religion."‡ While Independent principles thus favoured universal toleration, the Presbyterians, by advocating the establishment of classes, synods, and a general assembly, and by calling on the magistrate to enforce the authority of the Church, plainly interfered with the civil rights of the people. The thoughtful among the Independents therefore became more and more averse to the Presbyterian scheme; they saw that it would be fatal to those very liberties for which the nation had so valiantly contended in the field. Accordingly we

* Hallam's Const. History, vol. i. p. 612.

† "Queries of Consideration, proposed to Mr. Goodwin," &c. Hanbury, vol. ii. p. 246.

‡ This sentiment has sometimes been put into the lips of Nye, but there is not any historical evidence of his having uttered it on this occasion. I should question whether the five brethren were prepared to advocate in the Assembly the toleration of Papists.

find that Philip Nye, in the April of 1644, boldly contended before the Assembly that a Presbytery was inconsistent with the civil State. This was a galling accusation, and the Presbyterian party indignantly cried down the assertion as impertinent. Great confusion arose in the Assembly; but undismayed by the combined opposition of a large majority, the champion of Independency on the following day renewed the impeachment. It was an aggravation of his offence in the eyes of his adversaries, that he took advantage of the presence of some distinguished noblemen and others that day to make his bold avowal. He would enlighten these personages on the great question. He repeated that the liberties for which the people fought would be unsafe, if Presbyterianism were established. Again the Presbyterians endeavoured to silence him. The meeting was in a tumult. Some would have expelled him; but the Independents rallied round their intrepid friend, declaring their resolution not to enter the Assembly again if he was excluded. Whether after this scene of excitement, during which it is not improbable that Nye manifested some warmth of temper, he really became more calm in the advocacy of his principles, or whether it was a mere expression of triumph on the part of one who helped to form the majority of the Convocation, and to overcome by clamour the voice of reason, I do not venture to determine; but the Scotch Commissioner concludes his account of that memorable day's proceedings by observing, "Ever since we find him in all things the most accommodating man in the company."

The discussion respecting the Divine right of Pres-

byterianism for some time afterwards occupied the attention of the Assembly, till the majority decided the question in the affirmative. The Independents simply recorded their protest against his decision, complaining of the unkind treatment they had received, and stating that the majority did not consider it worth their while to debate with so inconsiderable a number of men. But though few who met in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster maintained the principles of Independency and toleration, the number of persons who out of doors sympathized in these views daily increased. The five champions became popular. Their cause was espoused by many of the people, and advocated in Parliament. The decision of the Assembly respecting Presbyterianism was modified in the House of Commons, and with increasing bitterness the Presbyterians went on assailing the Independents. It had been reported before, by an earnest advocate for a rigid Presbyterian discipline throughout the land, that the five brethren in the Assembly were deemed "the remora to the ship under sail; spokes in the wheel of the chariot of reformation." The accusation was now urged more keenly than ever. Nothing annoyed the Presbyterian brethren so much as the advocacy of toleration by the Independents. This they regarded as the grand "remora," the main "spoke." They were men intolerant of error and sin; they hated them intensely, and sought to extirpate them from the earth. Bravely did they fight for Christ's Crown and Covenant against foes of every class; longing, fervently longing, to subjugate all to his gracious authority. The spirit of the early Scotch martyrs and confessors,

the spirit of Knox himself, was in many of them. We do all honour to their noble aims; but there is a distinction to be made between just and unjust intolerance—between war against error to the death, war maintained with spiritual weapons, which is right,—and the persecution of the heretic, schismatic, and unbeliever, and his punishment with carnal weapons, which is wrong. Now our Presbyterian worthies did not make this distinction. All they thought of was extinguishing error and sin. They were for suppressing them by law,—suppressing them by all means, no matter how. Some of the Independents clearly saw the distinction which their brethren overlooked. “Let the erring ones remain,” said they, “untouched by law, unharmed by civil penalties.” “What,” asked the Presbyterian, “will you then tolerate error? will you countenance heresy, schism, and a thousand other evils?” “No, brother,” they were prepared to rejoin: “we are foes to error as decidedly as you can be: most intolerant are we of all that invades Christ’s empire, and disturbs the peace of His realms; but in putting it down, we must not employ any weapons which He has forbidden. ‘The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.’”

It should here be mentioned that there was another party in the country, of considerable importance in point of ability, rank, and influence, though they were but few in number, who, to some extent, sympathized with the Independents, and assisted them to fight their battles both in the Assembly and in Parliament. Selden, Whitelock, and some other distinguished men, had adopted the opinions commonly denominated Erastian. They considered that in the Scriptures no particular

form of ecclesiastical polity was enjoined, and that it was the business of the magistrate to determine forms of Church government in conformity with the interests of the commonwealth. These views were in complete opposition to those of the Independents: but then they led their advocates to oppose the Divine right of Presbyteries, and to anticipate by a firm resistance the encroachments of spiritual despotism, which they foresaw would be the result of Presbyterian ascendancy. Though proceeding on grounds very different from those adopted by the Independents, yet the Erastians concurred with them in zealously opposing the scheme of Presbyterian government and discipline; so that it happened, as it has often done on the field of controversy, that parties proceeding from distant, and even opposite points, found themselves at length side by side, and in cordial alliance, so far as it related to their assault upon the common foe. It was not in the character of religionists that the two parties formed this combination, for in that respect their opinions were far as the poles asunder; but in the character of patriots and politicians, in which they were fervently agreed, as the enemies of a party whose success they judged would be inimical to the general welfare of the country.

It forms no part of my purpose to follow the Westminster Assembly through their wearisome, though important, and, on the whole, skilful debates on Presbyterianism and various collateral questions. I would farther only briefly advert to the Committee of Accommodation; the object of which was to unite, if possible, the two contending parties in the Assembly. This Committee was formed as early as September 1644;

and the Parliament, who appointed the Committee, directed them, in case union were impracticable, to devise some plan to meet the scruples of tender consciences. The Committee selected six of their number, including two Independents, to draw up a draft of propositions, which was submitted to the Assembly. From this paper it appeared that the Independents claimed for all their male Church members the power of voting upon ecclesiastical questions; and they contended that nothing short of decided signs of grace, proving the regeneration of the soul, was a sufficient qualification for Church membership. These two positions were irreconcilable with the scheme supported by their opponents, which placed the Church under the power of Presbyters, and admitted to communion all who were not scandalous in their lives. It was not likely that a method could be found of comprehending in one scheme the oligarchical regimen of Presbyterianism with the democratical constitution of Independency—the promiscuous communion of the former with the select communion of the latter: yet the Independents were anxious to make the trial; but the Presbyterians repulsed them, by determining that first their own form of Church government should be settled as a standard, and then the exceptions of the dissentients should be taken into consideration. With vigorous haste they pushed onward the completion of their own model, fearful lest it should be endangered by the Independents,—a course which so disheartened the latter, that they abandoned in despair all attempts at comprehension, and satisfied themselves with a remonstrance, complaining of the unfair conduct of the Assembly. In

November 1645, the Committee was revived, and the Jerusalem Chamber became once more the scene of earnest debate. But now the question was simply—How far tender consciences, which cannot submit to the established form of ecclesiastical government, may be indulged consistently with the Word of God and the welfare of the nation? The Independents pleaded for a full toleration, to be shared by other sects as well as themselves,—to which the Presbyterians, of course, would by no means consent: and with difficulty could the former be brought to propose any measure of liberty from which others were to be excluded; but, urged by their opponents to state what they required in relation to their own case, they replied, that they did not demur to the Confession of Faith promulgated by the Assembly, but merely sought liberty to form their own congregations, to have the power of ordination, and to be free from Presbyterian domination. “In our answer,” observes our friend, Professor Baillie, glorying in the act as a great virtue, “we did flatly deny such a *vast* liberty.” A very limited indulgence was all that they would grant; namely, that Independents should not be *compelled* to receive the Lord’s Supper, nor be liable to synodical censure, provided they joined the parish congregation, and submitted to the ecclesiastical government in other respects. Yet even this miserable scantling of indulgence was not offered in good faith; for our busy correspondent, who lets us into the knowledge of many party secrets, informs a friend, that if they had not offered some positive indulgence to the Independents, they would have brought on themselves insupportable odium, but they

were persuaded that the limited offer they had made would not be accepted.* The Independents, of course, were not content with the Presbyterians' proposition, and still sought the liberty of meeting as distinct congregations. For doing this they were accused of schism; a charge they repelled, because they regarded schism as a breach of the law of love,—a law they felt they were not violating, since they regarded with affection their Presbyterian brethren, were prepared to exchange pulpits with them, and to hold occasional communion together. The threadbare argument about the abuse of liberty, and the opening of a door to all manner of sectaries, was zealously urged against the claims of toleration. Altar would be set up against altar; the seamless robe would be rent; the unity of the Church would be destroyed! At last the gentle Burroughs, whose meek soul sighed over the course pursued by his opponents, and the stormy character of the times in which his lot was cast, rose in the Assembly, and declared "that if their congregations might not be exempted from the power of the classes, if they might not have liberty to guide themselves in their own way, as long as they behaved peaceably towards the civil magistrate, they were resolved to suffer, or go to some other place in the world where they might enjoy their liberty. But while men think there is no way of peace but by forcing all to be of the same mind; while they think the civil sword is an ordinance of God to determine all controversies of divinity,—and that it must needs be attended with fines and imprisonment to the disobedient; while they apprehend there is no medium

* Baillie's Letters, &c. vol. ii. p. 343.

between a strict uniformity and a general confusion of all things; while these sentiments prevail, there must be a base subjection of men's consciences to slavery, a suppression of much truth, and great disturbances in the Christian world."* The expression of these wise and beautiful sentiments by the oppressed Independent closed the debates of this fruitless Committee of Accommodation.

The Assembly now dwindled away in point of numbers, sunk in public reputation, and declined in importance and influence, till, three weeks after the execution of Charles, they held, within the walls of the Abbey of Westminster, their last meeting, having completed their eleven hundred and sixty-third session. A few of the members, however, were constituted a Committee for examining and inducting ministers, who continued their office till they were broken up by the dissolution of the Long Parliament.

* Neal's History, vol. iii. p. 309.

CHAPTER VII.

OXFORD UNDER OWEN.

OXFORD was for a long period during the civil wars the head-quarters of King Charles. The city was fortified. The University became a garrison. The gownsmen was transformed into the military cavalier, and doffed the college cap for the steel helmet. The streets echoed with the iron-heeled boot of the soldier, and the tramp of the war-horse. Many a waggon, laden with ammunition and military stores, and guarded by pikemen, came rolling over the bridges, and through the gateways, which formed the inlets to that picturesque city. Valiant and loyal men—and numbers of the Cavaliers were both—there rallied round their sovereign in the hour of his need, prepared to fight his battles, and to die under his standard. The fortunes of the contest between him and his Parliament excited there the deepest feeling: every slight turn of fortune in his favour animated their hopes; every announcement of defeat—and such announcement often came—chilled, if it did not totally dispirit them. Amidst the excitement of the conflict, poor Charles there gathered round him the relics of his court, and strove to establish a Parliament which should rival the

mighty one at Westminster. The Chapter-house at Christ Church was his council-chamber. In the hall of that noble college he met the Lords and Commons who had identified themselves with his cause. It was but the mockery of royal state—the shadow of regal power. Charles had grasped at absolute monarchy; now he had lost all but the name of King.

Armies composed of no common troops, commanded by no common generals, and on whose banners victory almost always awaited, beleaguered the city of Oxford. That city made a stout resistance. It repelled the invader again and again. But at length Fairfax prevailed; and on Saturday, the 24th of June, 1646, at noon, three thousand men, the surrendering garrison, might be seen marching out, under arms, along the road to Shotover Hill.

During the whole period of the military occupation of Oxford, the University was in a most deplorable condition. Indeed, its literary character had almost entirely disappeared. Mars usurped the seat of Minerva. The schools were turned into granaries, the colleges into barracks, the butteries into shops for the sale of ale and beer to the garrison. Buildings fell into decay. Gothic halls and chambers were defaced and spoiled by a rude soldiery. Some were rented out to the townsmen as a source of revenue, and to prevent their falling into utter ruin. Books disappeared, to make way for, perhaps to purchase, firearms. College plate was melted down, and sold to procure pay for the royal army. Few persons connected with the University remained, besides heads of houses and professors. Lectures and exercises fell into disuse, ex-

cept in St. Mary's Church, where a scanty remnant of under-graduates were wont to assemble. The character of these young men is painted by the Oxford historian in the darkest colours, and the state of morals among them must have been degraded indeed to draw such a description from his partial pen. What few students remained, he tells us, were much debauched, and become idle, bearing arms, and keeping company with rude soldiers; they were on guard night after night, and were addicted to gaming, drinking, and profanity. Some men, who were of great wit at first, soon caught the prevalent spirit, and drowned their minds in habits of intoxication. They became lost and useless, and wrote songs, ballads, and other frivolous stuff.* The dilapidation of buildings, the poverty of the colleges, and the paucity of students, were the immediate effect of the civil wars; before which occurrence Oxford shone with the brightest external glory, numbering her four thousand scholars, among whom many a gentleman-commoner was distinguished by his costly doublet, glittering with silver or gold. But the moral character of the students during the siege appears to have been little more than a continuation of habits prevalent long before; for I find in the autobiography of Arthur Wilson, a student there in 1630, the following statement:—"That which was most burdensome to me in this my retirement was the debauchery of the University. For the most eminent scholars of the town, especially of St. John's College, (being of my acquaintance,) did work upon me by such endearments as took the name of civilities, (yet

* Wood's Annals of the University, edited by Gutch.

day and night could witness our madness,) and, I must confess, the whole time of my life besides did never so much transport me with drinking as that short time I lived at Oxford, and that with some of the gravest bachelors of divinity there." * Such was Prelatical Oxford. In this chapter the reader will see what it became under Puritan regimen.

As soon as the University fell into the hands of the Parliament, they concerted measures for its reformation. They proceeded with prudence, and, in the first instance, sent down seven popular divines, to subdue, if possible, by argument and persuasion, the irritated feelings of the vanquished party. The attempt entirely failed. The anti-Puritan prejudices of the Oxford men were only increased by the pulpit labours of the Presbyterian ministers. The Parliament then resolved to appoint commissioners to visit the colleges, to reform abuses, to enforce the submission of the University authorities, and to require all parties to take the solemn League and Covenant. Certain divines and civilians of repute were employed in the commission. Their proceedings were sternly resisted by the Vice-Chancellor and the heads of houses. The authority of Parliament to interfere with the University was denied; the imposition of the Covenant was denounced. There were warm controversies, legal appeals, tumultuous scenes. The commissioners certainly conducted themselves with moderation; the University, on the other hand, did not treat them with common politeness. The former Chancellor, the Earl of Pembroke, who had been deposed by the Royalists,

* Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa*, vol. ii. p. 470.

was now restored by the Parliament to his high office. On his public entrance to the city, he was treated with the greatest rudeness; and the Oxford press soon teemed with pamphlets written by the college wits, and filled with vulgar abuse of the reinstated Chancellor. "The Owl at Athens," "Lunacy Rampant," "Lord have mercy upon us," (the sign inscribed on the doors of houses infested with the plague,) "The Pegasus, or Flying Horse from Oxford," were the titles of some of these *jeux d'esprit*. In the last mentioned of these, my Lord Pembroke is styled "a long-legged piece of impertinency," and in all of them he is abused in a strain of the lowest scurrility, and the most envenomed malice. "If," as Neal justly remarks, "the Puritans had published such pamphlets against the exorbitances of the High Commission Court in the late times, the authors or publishers must have lost their ears, as the Brownists did their lives in the latter end of Queen Elizabeth." But the Parliament were determined not to be trifled with, and therefore at length took forcible measures to remove the disaffected from the University. The imposition of the Covenant on all the members must be deemed a flagrant violation of the rights of conscience; yet, the propriety of imposing religious tests being admitted, and acted on by the Prelatists themselves, it was very inconsistent in them to resist in the present instance. The Presbyterians were only doing with the Solemn League and Covenant what the Episcopalians have ever done with the Thirty-nine Articles. If the University be a part of the religious establishment of the country, and the propriety of religious tests be allowed, then it was

only consistent in the government, now that Presbyterianism was established, to enforce its own symbol. Still the refusal of the Oxford men to repudiate their own conscientious views of Church polity and worship, for the sake of University emoluments and honours, is worthy of all praise. They, however, only made a sacrifice of the same kind with that which Puritans had quietly done before, and had shortly to do again.

“Drab-coloured” Puritanism now became the order of the day at Oxford. The liturgy was no longer chaunted in the college chapel.* The surplice vanished from the desk. The altar rails were removed. The communion-table was placed in the aisle. The Genevan cloak and cap appeared in the pulpit. In most places the sounds of the organ ceased; the precentor, in Scotch fashion, led the devotions of the assembly. Images, crucifixes, and some other relics of Popery were removed. The city as well as the University underwent a change. The amusements of former days were abolished; the theatre was closed. In the streets, instead of the slashed doublet and drooping feather of the Cavalier, the high-crowned hat and plain cloak of the Roundhead became predominant.

All this appears very “drab coloured” in the eyes of those who love the romantic and the picturesque; but in connexion with it, another change appeared, truly beautiful in the eyes of those who supremely value the interests of morality and religion. The very enemies of the new heads of colleges have con-

* See Note [24].

fessed that they were severe in the government of their several houses,—that they kept a more than common watch over the morals of the students, and obliged them to an exact compliance with their statutes. The professors were indefatigable in instructing their pupils, both in public and private; religion flourished more than before; drunkenness, oaths, and profanation of the Lord's day were banished; strict piety and a profession of religion were in fashion; the scholars often met for prayer and religious conference: so that, as Mr. Philip Henry, who lived then in the University, observes, "If those of the old spirit and way were at first the better scholars, these were the better men." *

A want of taste for the fine arts, for the beautiful and the fair in artistic civilization, has often been charged on the Puritans, and, it must be confessed, with justice to a great extent. That generally they had not so much regard for such matters as their opponents, must be admitted. Undoubtedly, very many of them were to be blamed for their utter want of taste. Good men! they did not seem as if they could distinguish between art and its abuses; and because they saw it made subservient to superstition, they were for destroying its most exquisite monuments. Still, however, in this matter, as well as in others, the Puritans have not been always fairly dealt with. The principles of their conduct are misunderstood. Facts are laid to their charge of which they were innocent. They are all represented as savage Goths, demolishing what was beautiful, from want of power to appreciate its

* Neal's History, vol. iii. p. 473.

value. But in some instances it was from no want of taste that they destroyed market-crosses, pulled down the carved work in churches, spoiled the richly-painted windows, and marred the exquisite details of gothic architecture. They looked on them simply as the symbols of superstition and idolatry. Their feelings, in such respects, were akin to those of the primitive Christians in reference to the remains of classic genius, who saw in the temples of Rome the nests of idolatry, and in whose eyes "they reeked with impurity," and were on that account devoted to neglect or destruction.

And, farther, it is now acknowledged, even by those who are strongly prejudiced against all that belongs to Puritanism, that very exaggerated descriptions have come down to us respecting the destruction of works of art during the civil wars. "It is a common error," observes a writer in the *Archæological Journal*, "with ignorant persons, to ascribe most of the mischiefs from which churches have suffered, in the defacement of monuments, or the abstraction of brasses, to the period of the Great Rebellion. Scarce a parish-clerk is to be found who, in pointing out some mutilated figure, or some slab robbed of its effigy, does not lay the blame on Cromwell's soldiers. The Puritan faction, who overthrew for a time altar and throne, have sins enough to answer for without the addition of those which belong to a later period." * In the ordinance of Parliament for the removal of *Popish badges*, an express provision was introduced for the preservation of other

* *Archæological Journal*, vol. ii. p. 244. See also Weever, *Monumental Antiq.* p. 18.

works of art, "provided that this ordinance shall not extend to any image, picture, or coat of arms, in glass, stone, or otherwise, in any church, chapel, or church-yard, set up or engraven for a monument of any king, prince, nobleman, or other dead person, which has not been commonly reputed or taken for a saint." And that the order, even with this limitation, was not fully carried out, is obvious from the fact of so many statues and other monuments of Popery still remaining in places where the Parliament had full sway. Very little indeed, in the way of defacing the churches and other ecclesiastical buildings in Oxford, seems to have been done by the new occupants of the University. A paper is preserved in Peck's "*Desiderata Curiosa*," written by a renegade Papist, who wished to show his zeal in the cause of the Parliament by informing them of the relics of superstition and Popery, of considerable value, which were still spared by the presidents and fellows of Christ Church and Corpus Christi colleges. And it appears from Evelyn's Diary, that, when he visited Oxford in 1654, the University buildings which he went to see had sustained but little injury. "Went to New College, where the chapel was in its ancient garb, notwithstanding the scrupulosity of the time. Thence to Christ Church: the glass windows of the cathedral I found much abused. Next we walked to Magdalen College, where we saw the library and chapel, which was likewise in pontifical order, the altar only I think turned tablewise; and there was still the double organ, which abominations, as now esteemed, were almost universally abolished." The colleges that escaped the injuries

perpetrated by the royal garrison appear to have retained their integrity throughout the period of the Commonwealth. The soldiers of Charles did far more mischief there than any of the parties connected with Cromwell.

The quiet scenes of Puritan study were sometimes enlivened by grand ceremonials, after the form and manner of the olden times, the character of the actors only being changed. On the 17th of May, 1649, there was no small bustle in the University. Heads of houses, professors, and other members, were preparing for the arrival of some distinguished visitors. Crowds gathered in the streets,—the windows were filled with spectators; for Fairfax and Cromwell, with a staff of officers, were on their way to the seat of learning to receive its honours. They were welcomed with much rejoicing, and conducted to the apartments of the Warden of All Souls, where they were magnificently entertained. The heads of houses waited on them at their lodgings, and one of the fellows of the college delivered to them a congratulatory speech, which the Oxford historian pronounces a bad one, “but good enough for the occasion.” The hero of Naseby assured the authorities of the University that he and his companions were well aware no commonwealth could flourish without learning, and that, whatever the world said to the contrary, they meant to encourage it, and were so far from subtracting any of their means, that they purposed to add more. On the 19th they dined with the President of Magdalen College, and after the entertainment played bowls on the college green. In the afternoon they were conducted

to the schools; and a convocation being held, the degree of doctor of laws was conferred on Cromwell and Fairfax, and that of master of arts on their principal officers. The chieftains were robed in scarlet gowns in the vestry of the Convocation House, and, with the exception of the hood and square cap, which the Puritans scrupled to wear, and the silver staves, which the beadles had not been able to obtain from their predecessors in office, the appearance of the procession to the upper end of the Convocation Hall was as usual on such occasions. All the members standing bareheaded, Proctor Zauchy, in a most humble posture, presented the guests to the Vice-Chancellor, and delivered a short but flattering speech, "such as 'twas," adds Anthony Wood. The Vice-Chancellor addressed them in a like flattering strain; and the two brave warriors, crowned with their literary honours, sat down, one on each side of the Vice-Chancellor's chair. Zauchy's speech is not recorded; but if an incident, like that which once occurred when South was presenting a brave soldier for an honorary degree, had taken place, the ready witticism of that celebrated orator would have been most appropriate. "*Præsento vobis virum hunc belicosissimum*," commenced the Doctor, according to the usual form, when the warrior suddenly turned round,—"*qui nunquam antea tergiversatus est*," added that eminent wit. Button, a Fellow of Merton College, concluded the public proceedings of the Convocation by an oration; of which Wood can find nothing bad to say, but that it was not without sensible flattery, whence we may infer that it was not without ability and learning. The party then

adjourned to the Public Library, where they were entertained with a sumptuous banquet.

The visitors of the University proved the truth of Cromwell's remarks respecting the desire of the men then in power to promote the interests of learning. Strict orders were given for the diligent cultivation of literature, as well as religion; and it was enjoined, with a view to secure the greatest familiarity with the learned languages, that either Latin or Greek should be employed, at certain times, in conversation by the fellows, scholars, and students.

On the death of the Earl of Pembroke, in January 1650, a convocation was held, when the members of the University unanimously elected Oliver Cromwell to the office of Chancellor. Warriors seem by no means the fittest persons for such an office, but Oxford still retains a partiality for men of that class. The University has placed Wellington in the chair once occupied by Cromwell; and many of my readers will agree with Kohl, who says, "These are the two most remarkable chancellors of Oxford I ever heard of." Cromwell had something to recommend him for the post beside his military renown and political power. He was anything but an illiterate and tasteless fanatic. Waller, the poet, who was his kinsman, says he was very well read in the Greek and Roman story; and Whitelocke informs us that he was capable of holding a discourse in Latin with the Swedish Ambassador. Cromwell was a lover of the fine arts. He saved the painted windows of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, from spoliation; carefully preserved the Cartoons; and would permit no injury to be done to those noble spe-

cimens of architecture, Hampton Court and Windsor Castle. The man who employed Milton to draw up his state-papers, and Simon to engrave his coins, could not be destitute of taste. He was fond of music; and when the organ of Magdalen College was, at last, taken down, he ordered it to be conveyed to Hampton Court, where he had it placed in the great gallery, and was accustomed to soothe his mind amidst the cares of politics by listening to the tones of that noble instrument. Nor should it be forgotten, that Cromwell proved himself a patron of literature. His well-known permission to Walton to import paper for his noble Polyglott duty-free is an example. So is the following circumstance, mentioned by Dibdin in his "Northern Tour."* "An inventory of sums contributed to the College Library at Glasgow is preserved. The first leaf contains this memorandum: 'His Majesty's contribution was graciously granted at Setoun, the 14th of July, in 1633. Charles R. It is our gracious pleasure to grant for the advancement of the library and fabric of the College of Glasgow the sum of two hundred pounds sterling.' So much for the *promise* of Charles. The *performance* was from the privy purse of the Protector, twenty-one years afterwards, and is thus denoted: 'This sum was paid by the Lord Protector, A. D. 1654.'" It should also be remembered, that the establishment of a University at Durham, which has justly been regarded as reflecting honour on the name of Van Mildert, who was mainly instrumental in the accomplishment of the object a few years ago, was contemplated by Oliver Cromwell

* Vol. ii. p. 713.

nearly two centuries since, and was actually carried into effect, by writ of privy seal, dated May 15th, 1657; but the infant University speedily perished, owing to the death of the Lord Protector so soon afterwards. After the election of Cromwell to the office of Chancellor of Oxford, he sought to promote the literary welfare of the University. He bestowed on the Public Library twenty-five ancient MSS., of which the greater part were Greek; and he established a private divinity reader, with a stipend of a hundred pounds per annum.* But the best service he rendered to the University was in the nomination of Dr. John Owen, at that time Dean of Christ Church, to the Vice-Chancellorship.

Owen was an Independent, and therefore almost equally unwelcome to Presbyterians and Episcopalians; but his eminent qualifications, as a man of learning, talent, prudence, firmness, and piety, enabled him to achieve much for the good of the University, though the circumstances in which he was placed rendered his position extremely difficult.

Owen had been a student at Oxford, but his Puritanism and Independency excited a strong prejudice against him. About the time that he took his Doctor's degree, some of the leading men "did intend to battle him when he came to dispute; thinking that as he had been so long time absent from the University, he would be unready both in speaking Latin and disputing. He was better prepared, however, than they were aware of, and, keeping them to the strict rules of disputation, he managed the whole

* Harris's Life of Cromwell, p. 428.

exercise with such exactness as frustrated their expectations."*

During the period that Owen held the Vice-Chancellorship, he devoted himself to the accomplishment of University reforms, the promotion of the interests of sound learning, and especially to the object of rendering the college studies subservient to the efficient training of Christian Ministers. He was anxious to abolish the use of unnecessary oaths on taking office and other occasions; to multiply public exercises for the improvement of the students; to prevent the gownsmen, in general, from living idle in the University; so to modify the public Act as to render it an occasion for serious and useful discussions in philosophy; and to abolish the custom of allowing the *terre filii*, as they were called, to indulge in personal satire and vulgar abuse. He did not succeed in the accomplishment of all his plans, in consequence of the strong opposition made by parties in the University, who were prejudiced in favour of things as they had been. Yet, even Wood, with all his dislike to Owen and his associates, is compelled to acknowledge that he achieved some real public reformatations.

But the Oxford historian is sadly distressed at Owen's irregular proceedings with regard to college habits. Indeed, this is the principal complaint which he could find against the Vice-Chancellor's administration of college affairs. He allowed the preachers and officers of the University, as well as the students, to dress very much as they pleased, and seems to have

* Old MS. Life of Owen, in the possession of Dr. Raffles. It was found among the papers of Rev. Geo. Whitfield.

taken the same liberty himself. "Instead of short hair, collar-band, and cassock in the pulpit," Mr. Wood informs us, "we might have beheld long powdered hair, large bands, and half-shirts hanging out at their sleeves; and they themselves accounting nothing more ridiculous than starch formality. As for caps, square or round, none were worn publicly, only in some colleges at refection or scholastic exercises. Hoods were used but by few in the solemn meetings; afterwards by none but the Proctors, for the Vice-Chancellor never used one, but sat with his hat on, 'and that cockt.' Instead of being a grave example to the University, he scorned all formality,—undervalued his office, by going in quirpo, like a young scholar, with powdered hair, snake-bone band-strings, (or band-strings with very large tassels,) lawn band, a large set of ribands pointed at his knees, and Spanish leather boots with large lawn tops, and his hat mostly cocked." This representation brings Owen before us in the costume of a Cavalier rather than a Puritan; and if at all correct, is certainly irreconcilable with the pictures commonly drawn of the class of persons to whom he belonged. A Roundhead thus attired looks a very anomalous sort of being; and the description leads us to suspect, that let Owen have dressed as he might, he could not have pleased Mr. Wood and the rest of his prejudiced opponents. The poor Puritans have long been looked at by a certain class of historians through coloured spectacles,—or, to use the clever illustration of Grainger, the performances of these gentlemen remind us of the paintings of Brueghel, who so accustomed himself to paint witches and imps,

that, if he tried to paint a man, he was sure to make him like a devil.

The state of the case, however, would seem to be, that the Independents were by no means so precise in their dress as their brethren of the Presbyterian order; for we find Bastwick, one of the latter, in his book, bearing the formidable title of "The Utter Rout-ing of the Independent Army," very strongly inveigh-ing against the luxurious costume in which these sec-taries were accustomed to attire themselves. "You shall find them the only gallants in the world; with cuffs, and those great ones, at their very heels, and with more silver and gold upon their clothes and at their heels (for these upstarts must have silver spurs) than many great and honourable personages have in their purses." Grainger interprets Wood's ludicrous description of Owen as amounting to no more than a proof that the Vice-Chancellor dressed like a gentle-man,—an interpretation in which, perhaps, most of my readers will agree. But it is utterly impossible to conceive of him as having been anything of the dandy. No man was ever removed farther from all that is finical.

Owen had not a very easy time of it at Oxford, for the work of a reformer, especially in such a place, is a work of difficulty; and such was Owen's work during the whole of his Vice-Chancellorship. He was intent on effecting substantial reforms, promoting the interests of sound learning, elevating the moral character of the students, and encouraging the cultivation of evangelical piety. In doing this, he did not heed the forms and usages of former days sufficiently to please the admirers

of the old system. Hence he met with much opposition, and was charged sometimes by those who did not understand him with tolerating, if not countenancing, illiteracy and confusion. But his work at Oxford was, in truth, a brave and steady campaign against real abuses. He fought for true learning against pretended learning—real order against sham order. It was a battle between truth and semblances—between power and form—between life itself and a mere name to live.

Dr. Owen was Dean of Christ Church, the most magnificent of all the Oxford foundations, and a fitting memorial of the stately Churchmanship of its founder, Cardinal Wolsey. Within the handsome apartments appropriated to the Dean, the Doctor resided during his continuance in Oxford, and there pursued those theological studies, and wrote some of those profound and learned works, which have immortalized his name as a chief among the Divines of England. Whatever may be the estimate formed of him by the subsequent inmates of that noble college, or however his honoured name may have been treated by them with neglect, it is certainly not least among the distinctions it enjoys, that it includes in its list of Deans such a man as John Owen. Nor can it be denied that rarely, if ever, Christ Church flourished in sounder learning, exhibited more of order, and produced more hopeful and illustrious sons, than in the days when our Puritian Doctor, whether in hood or ‘cocked hat,’ with ‘snake band-strings, and lawn-topped boots,’ or more academic attire, presided in her hall, or rambled through her beautiful gardens. “Among the students he acted as

a father; while he discountenanced and punished the vicious, he encouraged and rewarded the modest and the indigent. He was hospitable in his own house, generous to poor scholars, some of whom he took into his family, and others he assisted by presents of money.* The following anecdote supplies an illustration of the last remark:—"Once, in Lent, he goes into the schools to hear the scholars disputing for their degrees; he takes special notice of one of Queen's, who was then but poor, but since hath made a considerable figure in the world, who, disputing with great ability, discovered the accuracy of his parts. The Doctor was mightily pleased with him, asked him who he was, and, understanding his circumstances, gave him 40s. to encourage him in his studies; and this gentleman did ever after acknowledge the Doctor's kindness to him at that time."†

Among the Canons of Christ Church was that distinguished scholar, Ralph Button, who, on his being elected to the Fellowship of Merton College, in 1633, entirely by his own merit, won from Dr. Prideaux, the Rector of Exeter College, the witty compliment, that "all who were elected beside him were not worth a Button." And among the gownsmen who in those days paced the solemn quadrangle, and loitered in the bright green meadows of Christ Church, were some as notable characters as Oxford has ever seen. That pale, delicate, studious young man, who has just taken his Bachelor's degree, is destined to carry his penetrating genius into the realms of metaphysics, and to place

* Orme's *Life of Owen*, p. 143.

† MS. *Life of Owen*, in the possession of Dr. Raffles.

himself, beyond all reasonable question, at the head of English philosophers; and with convincing power and manly eloquence he will expound those principles of toleration, for the maintenance of which the head of his college has had to fight many a battle. Yonder quiet, sedate youth, just issuing from his college-chambers, musing much as he walks along, is to be the founder of a new state in the far-off regions of the West, whose peaceful government, whose repudiation of war in every form, will stamp his empire with an unprecedented character, and render the country of his adoption and his rule unique in the history of the world. And the hearty-looking gownsman, with a keen but not very good-humoured expression, who has now passed under the college-gateway, is a person whose talents, wit, and manly eloquence, will render him one of the cleverest, if not one of the best, preachers of the Church of England. The reader will recognise these men as Locke, Penn, and South. They were all three students at Christ Church in Owen's time. Each of them was distinguished, though in a manner very different from the rest, by great ability. It would have been more honourable to the last of these remarkable individuals, if his brilliant wit had not been animated by bigotry and malevolence: but as early as the period of his taking a Bachelor's degree, in 1651, when, among the Christ Church men, he was engaged to perform some public exercise in its far-famed spacious hall, he prepared a speech, in which he employed all his powers severely to lash the sectaries of his house and the University. When, however, a large concourse were assembled to hear the young orator, he was thoroughly

humbled in their presence by sticking fast in the midst of his oration, and being compelled abruptly to give up the attempt. This humiliation for a while, it seems, had a salutary effect upon Master South, and he behaved so as to commend himself to the good opinion of Dr. Owen; but when the times changed, his bile rose with redoubled violence against the sectaries, and he most unmercifully abused the very man whose patronage he had sought and enjoyed, calling him the Coryphæus of the Independent faction.* Another distinguished man, but a far different character from South, was at the same time one of the Commoners of Christ Church. This was Philip Henry, the father of the well-known Commentator, and a man distinguished by his ability and learning, but still more by the elevated tone of his piety, which his son has so beautifully described in his matchless memoir.

Other colleges besides Christ Church were honoured by the presence of very remarkable men during these days of Puritan ascendancy. Crossing from Christ Church walk, over the meadows, we reach the old grey tower of Magdalen, throwing its long and stately shadow over the classic stream that flows at its foot. There was presiding over the college at that time the learned and pious Dr. Thomas Goodwin, already referred to as one of the Divines at Westminster. The report of his deep seriousness, perverted by the wits of succeeding times, gave rise to absurd tales respecting the President of Magdalen College; and it is to him, no doubt, that allusion is made in the Spectator, No. 494, where we have an account of a young man

* South's Sermons, vol. v. p. 48. Wood's Athen. vol. ii. p. 1042.

led through a darkened gallery, at noon, into a room hung with mourning, and illumined by a dim taper, where the Head of the College, with half-a-dozen nightcaps on, issues from an inner room, with religious horror on his countenance, to catechise the young matriculatist with questions about progress, not in learning, but in grace. The deep and earnest piety of these men was little understood by the frothy spirits of the next generation; and if in some cases it was tinged with an air of sadness, we can hardly wonder at it, when considering the troublesome times in which they lived, and the painful trials through which they had passed. Goodwin is described by Wood as one of the Atlases and Patriarchs of Independency; and as he was attached to the principles of ecclesiastical polity, known by that designation, he formed, in accordance with those principles, a church in his own college. Theophilus Gale, a Fellow of Magdalen, of whose deep and extensive learning "the Court of the Gentiles" is a noble monument; Stephen Charnock, the masterly author of the work on the "Divine Attributes," at that time a Fellow of New College, and Senior Proctor of the University; and Thankful Owen, a man of polite learning, and President of St. John's, were among the members of Dr. Goodwin's church. One truly illustrious individual, who was at the time Fellow of Magdalen, and who became a fellow-worshipper and communicant with that memorable little community, deserves special notice. See him there pacing the lovely walk by the river side, skirting the boundary of the college garden,—his form and countenance the very image of his uncommon mind. It may be

said of him, as Gregory Nyssen said of Basil, that "his face is attuned to harmony with the soul;" and, as he said himself of a friend, "He is wrought 'luto meliore,' of better or more accurately figured and finer turned clay."* "There is that in his looks and carriage," observes one who well knows him, "which discovers that he has something within that is uncommonly great, and tends to excite veneration." A rare combination of dignity and sweetness marks both the outward and the inward man. Seldom has the world seen a more finished specimen of humanity, both in its physical and intellectual aspect. His mind is not so remarkable for the possession of any one particular faculty, as for the union and harmony of his mental endowments, reminding us of a statue, in which no one limb or feature strikes us so much as the perfect symmetry of the whole; or of a beam of pure light, in which the prismatic colours melt into a flood of candid radiance. This highly-gifted man has cultivated his powers by the diligent acquisition of various learning; and, what is of more importance, has consecrated them to the service of his Maker. He has but just left his study, where volumes of the Schoolmen and Reformers, the Fathers, and the old philosophers, especially Plato, are his cherished companions, with the last of whom he communes in the fellowship of a kindred mind. And as he treads the river banks, and looks on the heavens, and the earth, the trees and flowers, his sanctified imagination sees in such objects a thousand beautiful mementos of the love and care, the power and wisdom, of that infinite Spirit, whose presence

* Rogers' Life of Howe.

pervades all nature. By prayer and meditation, "delighting in God," through the experience of the pleasures of elevated piety, tasting the "blessedness of the righteous,"—that extraordinary young man is "a living temple" to the praise of his Creator and Redeemer. The great John Howe—for every reader who has any acquaintance with his life and writings will recognise him in the person we have in view—was a Fellow of Magdalen during Goodwin's presidency. There, after having been at Cambridge for a short time, he pursued his philosophical and theological studies, devoting himself much to the study of the Scriptures, from which pure source he formed for himself a system of divinity, uninfluenced as much as possible by the views of others. It will surely constitute, to all who are acquainted with his invaluable writings, one of the most beautiful associations with the college buildings and grounds of Magdalen, to remember that *there*, in all probability, were originated some of those trains of original and profound thought,—that there were kindled some of those devout sentiments,—that there were suggested some of those sublime illustrations,—and that there were coined some of those felicitous expressions (amidst a style remarkable for its negligence), which have raised the works of John Howe to the highest rank in English theological literature. As Howe had, while at Oxford, a reputation for piety, and for a general accordance with the sentiments of Independency, as well as uncommon talents and learning, it was natural that Goodwin should wish to number him among the members of the Church formed at Magdalen; and, therefore, he took an opportunity

of speaking to him one day on the subject. Howe frankly informed him that the reason why he had not already united himself to them was, that he understood "they laid a great stress upon some peculiarities for which he had no fondness, though he could give others their liberty without any unkind thoughts of them; but that if they would admit him into their society upon catholic terms, he would readily become one of them." Goodwin affectionately embraced his worthy young friend, and told him he would do this with all his heart, and that he knew it would be much to the satisfaction and edification of the rest. Howe was accordingly enrolled among their number. The transaction reflected credit upon both parties. It indicated the conscientiousness of Howe, the catholicity of Goodwin, and the Scriptural principles which guided both; and it showed that the Congregational Church, which in those days met within the walls of Magdalen College, adhered to the law laid down in the fourteenth chapter of Romans,—a law which has never been repealed, though so commonly disregarded by the Churches of Christendom. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

In those days Dr. Greenwood was President of Brazennose. According to Neal, he was a profound scholar and divine; and according to Wood, a severe and good governor. Dr. John Conant was Rector of

Exeter, of whom Prideaux observed, "*Conanti nihil difficile.*" The college, we are informed by his biographer, "flourished so much under his government, that the students were many more than could be lodged within the walls. In his time it afforded a vice-chancellor, a proctor, a doctor of the chair in divinity, a moral philosophy and rhetoric reader to the University, a president of St. John's, a principal to Jesus, and a divinity professor to Magdalen College. Not to mention such as were transplanted thence to scholarships and fellowships in other colleges, many of whom were men of eminency afterwards." Dr. Robert Harris was President of Trinity, a man profoundly skilled in Hebrew, and well versed in chronology, Church history, the Councils, and Fathers. He gained the affections of his students, who revered him as a father, because he treated them as sons. Though he was stigmatized by his enemies as a pluralist, the writer of his life affirms, that whatever benefices might be conferred on him, he never reaped the profits of any. Dr. Staunton was President of Corpus,—a person equally noted for his attainments in literature and religion, and so intimately acquainted with the Scriptures, that he had the character of being a walking concordance. He set up a Divinity Lecture in the college chapel, preached himself once or twice on the Lord's day, catechised the juniors every Saturday, and had a weekly meeting in his own rooms for prayer and religious conversation. By his prudent government and pious example, religion and learning remarkably flourished in this college, and many who were educated under his care became learned, pious, and useful men,

among whom was Joseph Alleine, the well-known author of the "Call to the Unconverted."*

University College was under the headship of Dr. Joshua Hoyle, a person of recluse habits, who, if but little acquainted with men and things, had a large and intimate acquaintance with books. Previously to his residence in Oxford, he had been Divinity Professor in Dublin, where he spent more than fifteen years in the study of the Popish controversy, and in answering the works of Bellarmine; and devoted about the same space of time to the exposition of the Bible, ordinarily taking one verse a-day. Though a recluse, he was no idler: for in addition to these learned labours, he expounded publicly thrice every Sabbath, through the greater part of the year; once every holy-day, and sometimes twice. Dr. Henry Wilkinson, commonly styled Dean Harry, was President of Magdalen Hall. The Royalists at the Restoration were particularly anxious to retain his services; but he conscientiously refused to conform. His social virtues are recorded by Wood, and they must have been eminent indeed for him to canonize them. "He was courteous in speech and carriage, communicative of his knowledge, generous, charitable to the poor, and so public-spirited that he always minded the common good more than his own private concerns."†

The Warden of Wadham was Dr. John Wilkins, who, in 1656, married Oliver Cromwell's sister, and was promoted to the Mastership of Trinity College, Cambridge, whence he was raised, after the Restora-

* Palmer, Nonconf. Memorial, vol. i. p. 176.

† Athen. Oxon. vol. ii. p. 186.

tion, to the Bishopric of Chester. Almost equally eminent as a theologian, a critic, a preacher, and a mathematician, he reflected upon his college no small honour, and has associated his name, and the place of which he was warden, with the infant history of the most distinguished learned association of which England boasts. Within the large room, over the old gateway of Wadham, met some of the philosophers and scholars—the invisibles, as Boyle called them—the virtuosi, as they termed themselves—who were afterwards incorporated under the title of the Royal Society. Ward and Wallis, the first mathematicians of their age; Bathurst, Willis, Petty, and afterwards Boyle, names also well known to science, were of the party who assembled in that memorable apartment. Putting aside political and theological topics of debate, by which the kingdom had been divided and convulsed, these peaceful sons of science agreed to discourse on the circulation of the blood, the valves of the veins, the lymphatic vessels, the Copernican hypothesis, and a number of other scientific subjects. Some politicians, warriors, and perhaps controversial divines, of that day, might look with contempt upon this little band of quiet philosophers; yet they were, in a very high degree, promoting the interests of mankind, while gratifying their own intellectual taste: and who is there but must acknowledge there is something extremely beautiful in this amicable gathering of kindred minds, whether attached to King or Parliament, to Puritanism or Prelacy? Amidst the storms of civil war, and of theological strife, one loves in thought to search out these nooks in old England, where the contemplative,

in sequestered tranquillity, carried on their pursuits; to think of Izaak Walton, with his rod and line, on the banks of the Lea or the Dove; to visit Sir Thomas Browne, in his study at Norwich, exploding a long list of vulgar errors; and then to turn in at the gateway of Wadham, to ascend the chamber above it, and survey the learned conclave who formed the nucleus of the Royal Society.

There were other heads of houses, at the time, who were distinguished as men of high character and sound learning: such were Dr. Langbain, Provost of Queen's; Dr. Hakewell, Rector of Exeter; and Sir Nathaniel Brent, Warden of Merton.

Oxford was also rich in professors. Pocock, the celebrated oriental scholar, retained the Hebrew and Arabic chair throughout the Commonwealth; Seth Ward, the great astronomer as well as mathematician, lectured on his favourite science; Wallis was Savillian professor of geometry; Lewis de Moulin, the son of a French Protestant, a man of acuteness and learning, was Camden professor of history; Harmer, a Latin poet, and one of the best Grecians of his time, was Greek professor; and Dr. Henry Wilkinson, according to Wood, a good scholar, a close student, and an excellent preacher, was Margaret professor of divinity.

And beside these masters and professors, many a remarkable man might then be found within the precincts of the University. Stepping into the noble Bodleian Library, you see there, in the office of second keeper, Henry Stubbe, one of the most noted persons of his age. He pores over books of all kinds, the contents of which he retains in his prodigious memory.

He is at home in ecclesiastical and profane history, and equally so in mathematical studies. He speaks Greek and Latin with ease; and can unfold to you the mysteries of anatomy, chemistry, and medicine. He has a voluble tongue, and can run down his adversaries in the public school, or in private conversation. He is equally dexterous with his pen, and writes so as "none can equal, answer, or come near him." That head of carroty hair presents an emblem of the hot and restless brain it covers, whose everlasting activity has worn down his poor body to a skeleton. He is a perfect Ishmael, quarrelling with everybody; and when that fails, ready to quarrel with himself, like the sword of Hudibras—

"That ate into itself for lack
Of somebody to hew and hack."

Strange that this being, one of the cleverest and most accomplished of mortals, should not have been tamed by the remarkable adversities of his youth; by the cuffs and kicks from his fellow-students which his quarrelsome disposition procured for him; nor by a memorable whipping, to boot, which, for his impudence, he once received in the public refectory of Christ Church.* Yonder, in one of the recesses of the library, poring over old coins, sits a far different character, who has come down to Oxford to make a catalogue of the fine numismatic collection given to the Bodleian by Archbishop Laud. 'Tis no other than worthy Elias Ashmole, the high-priest of astrology, and the prince of antiquaries.

* Anth. Wood, vol. ii. p. 562.

Among the gownsmen whom you might have passed in the streets in those days, there were not a few young scholars and divines rising into distinction, whose names were ere long to command respect in the republic of letters, or to occupy attention in Church or State. Wadham could boast of Sprat, afterwards Bishop of Rochester; Queen's, of Compton, Bishop of Oxford; Lincoln, of Crewe, Bishop of Durham: Magdalen, of Cumberland, Bishop of Peterborough; Cartwright, Bishop of Chester; and Hopkins, Bishop of Raphoe and Derry: Hart Hall, of Bishop Ken; and Corpus Christi, of Bishop Jowler: not to mention other prelates, who were then among the alumni of the University. Sir Christopher Wren, at that time a prodigy of youthful genius;* Dr. Whitby, the fierce but talented anti-Calvinist; Matthew Poole, the great commentator; and our old friend Anthony Wood, the antiquary and historian, were also, during the period of the Puritan ascendancy, educated at Oxford. If the state of a University is to be estimated by the subsequent eminence of the men whom it trains up, then, judged of by this test, as well as by that of the character of the masters and professors who for the time being regulated its affairs and taught in its schools, and also by the general reputation which it bore for order, piety, and learning,—assuredly, Oxford may be said to have enjoyed some of its palmiest days under the vice-chancellorship of Owen and the protectorate of Oliver.

The inmates of the University were, at the time, by

* "July 10, 1654. Oxford.—After dinner visited that miracle of a youth, Christopher Wren."—*Evelyn's Memoirs*.

no means insensible to their advantages, and were neither slow nor lukewarm in acknowledging their obligations to the latter of these extraordinary men. No addresses that Oxford ever presented to a sovereign could be more deeply charged with expressions of gratitude, and ingenious compliments, than the addresses which it now laid at the feet of the Lord Protector. Some curious specimens of these productions are preserved in a little volume entitled "*Musarum Oxoniensium ΕΛΛΙΟΦΟΡΙΑ*." They were written to celebrate the peace which Oliver Cromwell concluded with the Dutch in 1654, and abound in panegyrics on his valour, policy, and patronage of letters. Owen takes the lead on the occasion, and, for once in his life, invokes the muse: Zouch, Harmer, Bathurst, Busby, Locke, Philip Henry, and others, take up the theme, in Greek, Latin, or English verse. But what is most remarkable, Dr. South figures in the volume among the most glowing eulogists of the "great usurper." Thirty years afterwards, this candid and amiable man could exclaim, when preaching in Westminster Abbey,—“And who that had beheld such a bankrupt, beggarly fellow as Cromwell, first entering the parliament-house with a threadbare torn cloak, and a greasy hat, (and perhaps neither of them paid for,) could have expected that in the space of so few years he should, by the murder of one king and the banishment of another, ascend the throne, be invested in the royal robes, and want nothing of the state of a king but the changing of his hat into a crown.”

But when Cromwell was Protector of England and Chancellor of the University, South could sing—

"Great ruler of the land and sea profound,
Thy praise the elements conspire to sound;
Thy genius deeper than the mighty deep,
Thy fame spreads wider than the billows sweep.
If thou ascend thy chariot, either pole
Bears up the wheels which still triumphant roll.
Thy martial scabbard, hanging by thy side,
Ensheaths thy country's power, and life, and pride.
'Tis thine alone to rule the raging main,
And bind proud Neptune in thy sovereign chain.
Thou, bravest conqueror, with triumphant hand
Scatt'rest thy trophies over sea and land.
In gentlest, noblest deeds, thy days abound,
The peaceful olive binds thy honours round.
Batavia's realm, rejoicing in thy smile,
Now shares the friendship of our British Isle;
That Isle, encircled by its ocean guard,
And by the victories of thy peerless sword."*

In the year 1657, Oliver Cromwell resigned the chancellorship of Oxford, upon which his son Richard was elected his successor. This led to the resignation of Owen, who was succeeded by Dr. Conant. On retiring from office he could, with some satisfaction, review his labours in the University. "A large number have been matriculated; twenty-six admitted to the degree of Doctor; three hundred and thirty-seven to the degree of M. A.; six hundred and ninety-seven to that of B. A. Professors' salaries lost for many years have been recovered and paid; some offices of respectability have been maintained; the rights and privileges of the University have been defended against all the efforts of its enemies; the treasury is tenfold increased; many of every rank in the University have been promoted to various honours and benefices; new exercises have been introduced and established; old ones have been duly performed; reformation of man-

* See Note [25].

ners has been diligently studied, in spite of the grumbling of certain profligate brawlers: labours have been numberless: besides submitting to the most enormous expense, often when brought to the brink of death, on your account, I have hated these limbs, and this feeble body which was ready to desert my mind: the reproaches of the vulgar have been disregarded; the envy of others has been overcome. I congratulate myself in a successor who can relieve me of this burden, and you in one who is able completely to repair any injury which your affairs may have suffered through our inattention. But as I know not whither the thread of my discourse might lead me, I here cut it short. I seek again my old labours, my usual watchings, my interrupted studies: as for you, gentlemen of the University, may you be happy, and fare you well." *

Such was the state of Oxford during the Commonwealth; and now let the reader decide whether it be just to speak of the leaders of the predominant party in Church and State as ignorant enthusiasts, and the enemies of learning.

It is common to represent Puritanism as a grovelling spirit, which crushed the seeds of genius and literature. So far as genius was occupied in the investigation of religious and political principles, and so far as literature was employed in diffusing their results, it is very unfair to charge Puritanism with being at all the enemy of either. As it was seen in the doings of the leading men at Oxford, it appeared as the friend of both. It animated many of them to

* Orme's Life of Owen, p. 151.

an intense study of divinity, with such an application of the aids of philology, criticism, the fathers, schoolmen, and modern writers, as might well shame numbers of the theologians of later times. The works which some of the leading Puritans produced about that time are monuments of their talents and attainments, as well as of their piety. Baxter, Owen, Howe, Charnock, and others, for depth of thought, compass of intelligence, and occasional power and even felicity of expression, will bear comparison with the most boasted names among the Anglican divines of that century. Their fault, and indeed their only fault, from which even their High Church rivals were not free, was a neglect of artistic culture, a slovenliness of style and arrangement. Certainly they did not value the graces of literature; but this, they pleaded—and there was *truth* in the plea—was because their souls were so earnestly occupied about the great realities with which their literature was conversant. “In my opinion,” said Owen, and Baxter and Howe would have echoed the sentiment, “he who in a theological contest should please himself with a display of rhetorical flourishes would derive no further advantage from it, but that his head, adorned with magnificent garlands and pellets, will fall a richer victim to the strokes of the learned.”

As a class, the Puritans can by no means be said to have cultivated the forms of poetry; yet were they poets in spite of themselves. They scorned the tales of romance, but their imagination was pictured over with the facts of Scripture. They little cared for Olympus and the haunts of the Muses, but they daily visited the

Hill of Zion, and talked with Prophets and Apostles. They frequented not the scenes of classic story, but they were familiar with scenes more exquisitely beautiful, more awfully sublime. Homer, Pindar, and Virgil, perhaps, they might not often study, but Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were poets whose rich and divine utterances were known to them as household words. The theatre they abhorred,—their just condemnation of its impure accessories prejudiced them against the richest creations of the dramatic muse; but they themselves trod an infinitely nobler stage in the presence of “a great cloud of witnesses.” They felt that they were a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. Others have written wonderful dramas,—they acted one more wonderful than was ever written. They lived in another world, and there they walked by faith in that highest realm of poetry. “Truly their lives were a great Epic.” Nor did that soul of poetry which dwelt within them fail to express itself in their writings and conversation. There are multitudes of passages in their books to which, perhaps, some critics would point as teeming with enthusiasm, which are, in fact, redolent with the genuine spirit of poetry; and their ordinary speech, so often ridiculed, would sometimes glitter with scriptural allusions instinct with poetic fire.

As to the lower classes among the Puritans, they were, to say the least, as intelligent as their compeers on the other side. If they were ignorant of elegant literature, they knew something about the Bible, and the writings and sayings of popular divines;—knowledge which, even in a literary point of view, it seems a desecration to compare with the loose songs and scraps of ribald

wit which formed the staple of Cavalier learning among the lower orders.

But, after all, did Puritanism altogether lack sons who walked in the paths of polite literature, and in the regions of poetry, commonly so called? Were not Harrington, and Marvel, Puritans and Commonwealthsmen? Did they not meet with other wits and poets of the day, in true literary conclave, at the Turk's Head, in Palace-yard, to speculate on the profoundest themes, or playfully to chat together in conversation seasoned with salt as pungent as any Attic wit? And have they not written works of literary renown, which all parties since have conspired to praise? Was not Milton a Puritan? Does not his name stand far above every other poet since the days of Shakspeare? For the solitary grandeur of his genius, and for all its wayward aberrations, too, may he not be likened to his own—

“Wandering moon,
Riding near his highest noon,
Like one that hath been led astray,
Through the Heaven's wide pathless way.”

Was not Waller of the Puritan school, though some parts of his history disgrace alike that name and the poetic talent with which it was associated? Nor should George Withers, a poet who, after long oblivion, is now rising into merited notice and admiration, be forgotten here. Did not he imbibe most enthusiastically the principles of Puritanism, and yet retain, though he overtasked with labour, that sweet muse, whose praises he thus exquisitely sang in the days of his youth?—

"By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough's rusteling;
By a daisy, whose leaves spread,
Shut when Titan goes to bed;
Or a shady bush or tree,—
She could more infuse in me
Than all Nature's beauties can
In some other wiser man."

Truly, these Puritans were not altogether unpoetical! But we are wandering far from Oxford, though not from the haunts of the Muses.

Owen left the University—Cromwell died—Puritanism declined—the Restoration came—and the old party in Oxford regained the ascendant. And let their own partial historian record the result:—"The hope of this," the Restoration, "made the scholars talk loud, drink healths, and curse Meroz in the very streets; insomuch that when the King came in, nay, when the King was but voted in, they were not only like them that dream, but like them who are out of their wits—mad, stark-staring mad: to study was fanatical; to be moderate was downright rebellion; and thus it continued for a twelvemonth,"—and longer too, it would seem, if we are to believe what Neal says under the year 1669. After describing the notorious profligacy of Charles the Second's court, he observes, "The University was no less corrupt: there was a general licentiousness of manners among the students: the sermons of the younger divines were filled with encomiums upon the Church and satire against the Nonconformists: the evangelical doctrines of repentance, faith, charity, and practical religion were out of fashion. The speeches and panegyrics pronounced by the orators and *terre filii* on public occasions were scurrilous, and little less

than blasphemous." This general statement the historian supports by supplying the copy of a letter from Mr. John Wallis to the Hon. Robert Boyle, dated Oxford, July 17, 1669, from which the following passages are extracted:—"Friday, July 9, was the dedication of our new theatre. In the morning was held a convocation in it for entering upon the possession of it, wherein was read first the Archbishop's instrument of donation, sealed with his episcopal seal, of the theatre, with all its furniture, to the end that St. Mary's Church may not be further profaned by holding the Act in it; next a letter of his, declaring his intention to lay out 2000*l.* for a purchase to endow it; then a letter of thanks to be sent to the University to him, wherein he is acknowledged to be both our *Creator* and *Redeemer*, for having not only built a theatre for the Act, but, which is more, delivered the blessed Virgin from being so profaned for the future. After the voting of this letter, Dr. South, as University orator, made a long oration; the first part of which consisted of satirical invectives against *Cromwell*, *fanatics*, the *Royal Society*, and new philosophy. The next, of encomiastics in praise of the Archbishop, the theatre, the Vice-Chancellor, the architect, and the painter. The last, of execrations against fanatics, conventicles, comprehension, and new philosophy, damning them *ad inferos ad Gehennam*." "The terræ filii for both days were abominably scurrilous, and so suffered to proceed without the least check or interruption from Vice-Chancellor, pro-Vice-Chancellors, Proctors, Curators, or any of those who were to govern the exercises. During this solemnity, and for some days before and since, have been constantly acted, by the Vice-Chancel-

lor's allowance, two stage plays in a day, by those of the Duke of York's house, at a theatre erected for that purpose at the Town Hall, which, for aught I hear, was much the more innocent theatre of the two." All this certainly exhibits a very different state of things from what prevailed during the Commonwealth. Some will think drab-coloured Puritanism was to be preferred to scarlet-coloured profligacy.*

* See the whole letter in Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. iv. p. 423.

CHAPTER VIII.

BAXTER AT KIDDERMINSTER.

FEW of our parish-churches have a more imposing appearance than the fine old structure dedicated to St. Mary, which, with its embattled tower, rises as a landmark above the thickly-clustered dwellings of the industrious town of Kidderminster. Commenced in the decorated, and completed in the perpendicular style of architecture, it forms, like so many of our ecclesiastical edifices, a specimen of the changing fashions adopted by the mediæval builders. It has been restored of late to more perhaps than its original beauty, through that revival of gothic taste which constitutes one of the most obvious signs of the artistic predilections of the day. Nave, ailes, and choir have all undergone a complete restoration, and seem to have recovered the freshness they wore when touched by the chisel of the last of the original workmen. However admirable such restorations may be as efforts of art, it is deeply to be deplored when they proceed from a sympathy with the ecclesiastical spirit of the middle ages, and are employed as the means of bringing back the forms of worship which then prevailed. When this is the case, they embody the tendencies of Archbishop Laud and his party; they develop an anti-

Protestant character, and are likely to imperil the interests of the Church of England; they indicate the return of that state of things, so far as the establishment of constitutional liberty allows, which created the terrible Puritan reaction of that period, and roused the storm which swept away the Episcopal system like thistledown before the whirlwind.

In 1640, when the storm was just about to break on the head of the Archbishop and his abettors, there was, commencing his ministry within the walls of this large church at Kidderminster, a man who was one of the leading spirits of the anti-Papal party; who abhorred, with intense hatred, the spirit of error and superstition which he saw gathering in so many directions; who, with almost superhuman energy, showed himself to be valiant for the truth upon the earth, yet with all his polemical zeal and activity, never forgot the more spiritual duties of his office, but found in their discharge his chief delight; and who afforded, in his preaching and pastoral labours, perhaps the most conspicuous example of an earnest ministry since apostolic times. The name of Richard Baxter will to the latest hour remain associated with the church and town of Kidderminster in resplendent honour. In the parish-church, no relic connected with the toils of our illustrious Puritan is preserved; but the pulpit in which he preached may be seen in the vestry of the New Meeting, where it is treasured up with a veneration due to the memory of him who so efficiently occupied it. It is a specimen of the quaint and elaborate carving in fashion at the time when it was erected. It bears the date of 1621.

Baxter was invited to become the lecturer of the place in the month of March, 1640. A person of the name of Drance was at that time the minister, as idle as he was ignorant, as vicious as he was weak,—preaching only once a quarter, and habitually preferring the alehouse to the study. His curate was a kindred spirit, known by all the people as a confirmed tippler, and increasing his official fees by celebrating unlawful marriages. These men were specimens of the clergy of the times; and no wonder that with this carelessness and immorality in some quarters, combined with unequivocal expressions of attachment to Roman superstition in others, a large portion of the community lost their regard for the Church as established by law, and welcomed any change which promised them more enlightened and exemplary guides. A committee having been appointed by the Long Parliament to receive petitions against dissolute and superstitious ministers, documents of that kind were sent in great numbers; and the good people at Kidderminster were not slow in complainings of the vicar and curate who so disgraced their profession. Alarmed at their proceedings, the former individual, to preserve some part of his emoluments, offered to compromise with the town, by dismissing his assistant, and resigning the sum of sixty pounds per annum as a stipend to any preacher whom a committee of the parish might choose. Baxter, who had been labouring at Dudley and Bridgenorth, with that zeal and success which gave promise of his subsequent eminence, was affectionately invited to fill the office; and the instrument forwarded to him for that purpose, and still preserved

in the Red Cross-street Library, breathes a spirit of primitive Christian simplicity and love. The population of the town, and the size of the church, presented to Baxter a sphere of usefulness which he gladly consented to occupy, without allowing pecuniary considerations to influence his mind. Writing afterwards to some imperious personage, who assumed to be his patron, and impugned his motives, he observes, "When I first came, I forsook the motion of the best place in Shropshire, my native county, and a richer and more eminently religious people, to come hither. I was offered my choice of vacant places in four counties, and one place reported 500*l.* per annum, and many of 300*l.*" Disinterestedness was, beyond all question, a trait in his character; of which his history abounds in proofs, especially his refusal of a bishopric after the Restoration, and his voluntary endurance of poverty, privations, and all kinds of trials for so many years. In another of his letters, written at a much later period, to a person who had maligned him (and of such there seem to have been many), he remarks, "I suppose you will think that my refusal of a bishopric, and the salary of the King's Chaplain's place, could not this twenty-three years amount to much less than 20,000*l.* I have been put to the charge of removing my dwelling-place ten times. I was cast out of my own place, 1660, before most others; and was refused to preach there or anywhere for nothing. I never had a church to maintain me, nor any salary for preaching these twenty years. I have been laid in jails; and received there not a farthing towards my charges from any person living, save three. I have

had all my goods and books taken from me and sold, and warrants signed against me five or six at once, being never called to speak for myself, or know who accused me." *


Baxter, though entitled to the vicarage, and authorized by Parliament to occupy the parsonage-house, cheerfully yielded it to the old vicar; nor did he ever receive more than 80*l.* or 90*l.* a-year. In addition, he was allowed house-rent for a few rooms at the top of another man's house, which, he says, was all he had at Kidderminster. In another place he tells us, "If any one refused to pay his tithes, if he was poor, I ordered them to forgive it him. After that I was constrained to let the tithes be gathered as by my title, to save the gatherers from law-suits. But if the parties were able, I ordered them to seek it by the magistrate, with the damage, and give both my part and the damages to the poor; for I resolved to have none of it myself that was recovered by law, and yet I could not tolerate the sacrilege and fraud of covetous men." At the end of about two years, such was the violent opposition that the devoted pastor met with in his work, and such was the animosity manifested toward him on political grounds by the Royalist party, that he was compelled for a time to leave the town. "There goes a traitor!" "Down with the Roundheads!" were the salutations he met with in the streets and market-place; and on one occasion the rabble assailed him with clubs, and sought his life. He joined the army with religious rather than political views; for though he was a Presbyterian, he was a zealous Royalist,—

* Extracted from Baxter MSS., Red Cross Library.

not indeed approving of the oppressive measures of the Government, but being warmly attached to his Majesty's person, and a firm supporter of his just prerogatives. With his polemical turn of mind, he was anxious to set everybody right in theological opinions; and he esteemed his admission into the army as chaplain in the light of a divine call to expose the errors, and to seek the reconciliation of the different sects of which the army was composed. Defeated in this purpose, he gladly returned, when circumstances permitted, to the bosom of his former flock.

The history of his pastorate for twenty years, with the short intermission just mentioned, is one of the most remarkable and beautiful episodes in the annals of the Christian Church, and eminently deserves the practical study of every servant of Christ who desires to make full proof of his ministry. No didactic treatise, however lucid—no arguments, however cogent—no appeals, however pathetic, have the constraining power over the heart of the conscientious pastor which the story of Baxter's life and labours at Kidderminster is felt to exert. Preaching was his forte. His practical works contain the substance of many of his discourses; and the treatises on "Crucifying the World," on "Saving Faith," on "Sound Conversion," on "Peace of Conscience," on "Safe Religion," and on "Death," together with his "Call to the Unconverted," were all composed at Kidderminster, and abound in specimens of the reasoning and the application with which he filled his discourses. So evangelical and practical—so instructive and awakening—so convincing and pungent, they are models of pulpit eloquence. Now grap-

pling with the understanding, and then aiming at the heart, he must alternately have confounded his hearers with his acuteness, and melted them with his fervour. Working out his logic not in frost but fire, since he full well knew the former had little power over human minds, he flung from his hallowed lips those burning utterances of truth which make men pause and weep, and the spirits of darkness quail and tremble. There is a clear and articulate tone of enunciating truth natural to healthy souls—a sign of vigorous spiritual life utterly different from the indistinct mutterings of those who by mimicry have caught a few of the common places of religion. No person can mistake the one for the other; nor can we at present read, nor could we in Baxter's lifetime have heard that wonderful preacher proclaim the Gospel in the church of Kidderminster, without feeling that before us was a God-taught man, and that the immense concourse gathered within the walls, and hanging spell-bound on his lips, felt it too. His manner of delivery harmonized with his style and spirit of thought. "I was then also in the vigour of my spirits, and had naturally a familiar moving voice (which is a great matter with the common hearers); and doing all in bodily weakness as a dying man, my soul was the more easily brought to seriousness, and to preach as a dying man to dying men. For drowsy formality and customariness doth but stupify the hearers and rock them asleep. It must be serious preaching which will make men serious in hearing and obeying it." Before the wars he preached twice on the Lord's day, but afterwards only once, besides a Thursday service



and occasional sermons. On Thursday evening he met at his own house as many as were willing to attend, one of whom recapitulated the discourse; and all were encouraged to ask questions, which the pastor patiently answered. The service ended with prayer, in which the people sometimes engaged. On Saturday evening they had a meeting to improve the engagements of the former Sabbath, and prepare for the approaching one. A day of humiliation occurred every few weeks. Two days in the week, Baxter and his assistant took fourteen families between them for private catechising and conference. He spent an hour with each household, and allowed no others to be present, and thus occupied the afternoons of Monday and Tuesday: his assistant spending the morning in the same employment. A passage from a letter to a friend, who sought counsel upon the subject of preparing his associate for the pastoral work, affords an interesting and valuable example of the manner in which Baxter trained his colleague to the discharge of his duties. "The way I took was this:—For certain weeks my assistant was always present when I did my work, and he helped me in hearing them repeat the words, and then sat by while I discoursed with them, by which means he quickly perceived the way that I took; and then I publicly desired one-half of the town to go to him, as the other did to me; and at first they slighted him, till the reports of the first had much commended his way to the rest, and then they submitted. And the most bashful had rather go to him than me, because they are bolder with him. And then for the parish, he went himself from house to house, sometimes many

miles in a day. The most that I insist on of any one thing is a description of the new creature to them, and the nature and necessity of sanctification: after the explication of the principal credenda."

Church discipline had been totally neglected; and this Baxter set himself with characteristic zeal to restore and establish. Out of six hundred communicants, there were not twelve of whose sincerity he had not hope. He gathered those who professed religion into the fellowship of a select and separate church; from which any who afterwards conducted themselves so as to bring a scandal on the Christian name were formally expelled. Over these persons, whom he specially esteemed his flock, he watched with an affectionate solicitude, and earnestly and patiently sought to bring any erring brethren to a sense of their misconduct, and to restore such in the spirit of meekness. His correspondence bears witness to these efforts. Long epistles of reproof, remonstrance, and appeal exist among his MSS.; and it was with peculiar emotion that I lighted on one large and closely-written letter, dated "this Saturday night, at 11 o'clock, with an aching head and heart, and weeping eyes." There is another letter addressed to the son of pious parents, so remarkable for that earnest faithfulness which distinguishes the practical works of Richard Baxter, and so calculated to make the conscience of such a person as he was now addressing quake with terror, that I cannot forbear the insertion of the following extract:—

"I was loth to credit the report, but made further enquiry of some that I knew to be your friends, and all

confirmed it. So I am in great fear lest it be true. Sir, believe it, these lines are not begun to you without tears. Alas! that the only son, the too much beloved darling of my dear deceased friend, should prove a wretch, an insensible neglecter of God and his salvation, and an heir of everlasting misery (without conversion). Shall the soul of such an affectionate, careful mother, see you in damnation? Shall the heart of a loving father, who looked for much of his earthly comfort in you, have his greatest earthly sorrows from you? Is it not sorrow enough to him to part with half himself, but he must see his only son as lost and dead while he is alive? Sir, if you cannot feel words, you shall shortly have that which will make you feel. Is your heart become a stone? Have you so lately seen the face of death in a deceased mother, and do you no better bethink you of your own? I beseech you, for the sake of her that charged you, by her last words to you, to be ruled by me; nay, I beseech you, for the sake of God, and of the soul, that you would take these lines a little into your private serious thoughts, if you know how to be serious, and that you will not exceed any further in your folly till you can tell how to answer the questions which I shall put to you. Sir, what do you think on? Do you not believe that the infinite God beholdeth you, and that you live in his presence? Is God's presence nothing to you? Are you affected with nothing but what you see? Do you live only by sense, and not by faith? Say not so, without an acknowledgment of brutishness. Do not so, unless you will disown your manhood. I beseech you tell me, do you ever think of dying, and of what follows? If not,

what shift do you make to overcome your wit as to forget it? If you do, what shift make you to overcome your wit and sense itself, so far as to disregard it? Can your guilty soul endure the terrors of an offended Majesty? Is it nothing to be condemned by the most holy God to everlasting torments? Sir, you had best bethink you quickly who you have to do with. It is not only an earthly father that you offend. But you, a creature, and a subject of the Eternal Majesty,—you owe him your highest love and obedience; and he will have it, or he will have your heart's blood for it. He will make you know yourself, and know your Maker, and know his laws, and know your duty; or he will make you howl in endless misery for it. You may make bold with a man like yourself, but be not too bold with the consuming fire." In a similar strain of terrifying earnestness he continues his address, concluding it with a passage of intense solemnity.

In connexion with all his spiritual duties in the parish, Baxter, with the best of motives, but with questionable prudence, performed the office of a physician. Twenty would come to his door at a time, seeking his gratuitous advice, and applying for medicines, which he also dispensed without receiving payment. This was the way to become a popular doctor: but he found at length that to be the town Esculapius sadly interfered with his higher duties; while the consciousness he had of the imperfection of his medical knowledge made him feel uneasy, lest through unskillfulness he should kill or injure those whom he wished to cure. After some years' practice, he accordingly procured a diligent and pious physician to come and

live in the town, and resolved no more to meddle with the healing art, except in consultation with that gentleman. A further reason for this step is supplied in a curious letter by a friend to Sylvester, the editor of *Baxter's Life*, giving him hints for a biography. "At Kidderminster," remarks this correspondent, "he practised the physician, &c. amongst the country people, and gave them physic also freely. Some recommended him much for that: some others said, though he will take no money, his housekeeper will take as many pigs and hens as you will. So finding that ill requital, he sent for Dr. Jackson among them, and let them pay for the physic and the doctor too." But misrepresentation and obloquy were Baxter's lot through life; yet, "through evil report and good report," he persevered in what he felt to be his imperative duty. "Riding with him one day," observes the same person, "he told me the fable of the old man and his ass; saying he could never do anything to purpose till he got above the censures of people, it being impossible to please all."

Pastoral duties, so fully discharged as his were, could not but tell most powerfully upon the church and the whole town; and the result, as detailed by himself, forms one of the most encouraging instances of ministerial success on record. "My public preaching met with an attentive, diligent auditory. Having broke over the brunt of the opposition of the rabble before the wars, I found them afterwards tractable and unprejudiced. Before I entered the ministry, God blessed my conference to some, who remain firm and eminent in holiness to this day; but then, and in the beginning

of my ministry, I was wont to number them as jewels; but since then I could not keep any number of them. The congregation was usually full, so that we were fain to build five galleries after my coming thither; the church itself being very capacious, and the most commodious that ever I was in. Our private meetings also were full. On the Lord's days there was no disorder to be seen in the streets; but you might hear a hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through them. In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name; and when I came away, there were some streets where there was not one poor family in the side that did not so, and that did not, by professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity. And in those families which were the worst—being inns and alehouses—usually some persons in each house did seem to be religious.”

After relating the history of his success, he enumerates several circumstances which, in his opinion, greatly contributed to it. He mentions the previous want of an awakening ministry, so that his labours came with the recommendation of novelty and freshness. He had, as before noticed, a persuasive voice, and was in the vigour of his spirits when he settled at Kidderminster. The enemies of religion, who had risen in tumults against him on his first entrance to the town, went into the King's army, and were slain in the wars. The changes in public affairs removed many impediments to the progress of religion. “Though Cromwell,” he observes, “gave liberty to all sects

among us, and did not set up any party alone by force, yet this much gave abundant advantage to the Gospel, removing the prejudices and the terrors which hindered it, especially considering that godliness had countenance and reputation also as well as liberty." He became personally acceptable among the people, and was much aided by the zealous co-operation of those of them who were pious. Their holy and blameless lives were also a great advantage, as were the unity, peace, and concord which prevailed amongst them. The private meetings were a very efficient help to the propagation of Christianity; and public disputations, held with certain sectaries whom Baxter disapproved, promoted, as he thought, purity of faith, government, and discipline. He particularly commends the integrity and diligence of his assistants; and notices as a circumstance favourable to his success, that his means, though limited, enabled him to render some small relief to the poor. By the books he wrote, and gave away, the seeds of religious truth were sown, or nourished, in many minds; while the occupation of the townspeople, as weavers, gave them opportunity for reading, not only at their leisure, but even while working in their looms. His being unmarried, and his practising physic, he describes as subservient to the results recorded; but a far more unquestionable source of usefulness will be recognised in the hold which he says religion took upon the families of the town, including the children, and in the catechising conferences and maintenance of discipline already noticed. He alludes to the directness of his preaching, and its evangelical character; to his not meddling in

secular matters; and finally, to his long continuance in one place, as of the greatest importance to his ministerial success. But the main secret, under God, of the extraordinary effects produced by his labours, may be, no doubt, found in that intense singleness of purpose, which was the spring of his activity. He laboured for one end—the salvation of souls, and the glory of God. While many fritter away their lives, and allow their energies to ravel out and run to waste,—while they have no goal to which they run, no mark at which they aim, and no law by which they work,—Baxter gathered up all the power of his gifted nature, and, with a decision as rare as it was perfect, concentrated them upon the divine object of leading his fellow-creatures to heaven.

Such a man was a treasure indeed; and there were many in Kidderminster who esteemed him very highly in love for his work's sake, and fervently desired the continuance of his pastoral relation; but when the restoration of Charles II. took place, and a Prelatical Church was re-established in England, he, in common with numbers of his brethren, was ejected. A mitre was offered him, and refused; but the privilege of continuing to preach in his favourite parish he sought in vain. The applications he made for it he records at length, and describes the King and Lord Clarendon as not unfavourable to the arrangement; but it was set aside, he tells us, by the crafty conduct of Sir Ralph Clare, a great man in Kidderminster, and the animosity of Morley, Bishop of Worcester. Though he was no longer permitted to dwell amongst them, the people ever retained a chief place in his affections; and it is

deeply interesting to read the expression of attachment and love which passed between the pastor and his flock after their separation. A letter is preserved among his papers in which they address him in the following manner:—

“Reverend and most dearly Beloved,—Your indefatigable diligence in your ministry, and unparalleled liberality for divers years past, hath sufficiently manifested your tenderness of us; yet it is no small addition to our comfort that you are pleased to own us as your charge, notwithstanding your present sufferings for our sakes, and to continue your care of us in your seasonable instructions, and distributions of your love tokens to us, which we thankfully accept.”

They acknowledge their want of proficiency under his pastoral inspection, and lament their condition as sheep upon the mountains without a shepherd, so that they were a “wonderment to some,” and a scorn to many. They afterwards entreat his continued regards and prayers in the following terms:—


“Be not weary therefore of well doing, and of suffering for well doing; for in due time you shall reap, if you faint not. Meanwhile, most dear Sir, follow on those your encouraging exhortations by your fervent prayers, that your glorying in us may not be in vain, but that we may be kept by the power of God through faith unto eternal salvation.” *

In connexion with this, let me add an extract from a letter to his parishioners, preserved among his MSS.:—“The remembrance of the years of mercy which God vouchsafed me among you is pleasant to me;

* Baxter MSS.

yea, it is the pleasantest part of all my life in the review. I do with pleasure think of Dudley, where I first preached occasionally, because of the great congregation of a willing poor people that used there to crowd for instruction; and I do with pleasure remember the liberty which I had at Bridgenorth, by means of the great privileges of the place, in times of prelatical violence. I do with much thankfulness remember the safety, quietness, and mercies of many sorts, which I and some of you enjoyed at Coventry, while the nation round about was in war, and the merciful preservations which we had in those unpleasing times. But the thought of my comforts among you is sweeter to me than all, because my successes were nowhere so great. It comforteth me to think from what a state of riotous prophaneness and ignorance your town is changed, and how commonly now the fear of God prevaieth, and how few, if any, there be now that oppose it; and that you can reproach the prayerless and contemnners of godliness with the charge of singularity, as such were wont to do the godly. It comforteth me to remember how many upright souls are already departed in peace, and safely arrived at the desired rest, having fought a good fight and finished their course, and now enjoy the crown of righteousness. It comforteth me to remember how willingly you received the word of truth; how diligently the ablest of you were my helpers; how peaceably you all lived, without any schism, or any separated meeting, or any erroneous sect,—unless two or three infidels and three or four drunkards might be called sectaries; and how all the attempts of Anabaptists and Quakers, &c. never to my

knowledge prevailed to the perverting of any among you, though we gave them leave publicly to dispute for their cause. It rejoiceth me to think how, by your concord, and freedom from heresy and schism, living in love and unity, your example confuteth those that would now persuade the ignorant that there was nothing but schism and confusion in those times; and how much your leading example did to further piety and agreement in the towns and country round about, especially your common submission to catechising and personal conference and instruction, when almost all the town came willingly to my house, and the parish received Mr. Sergeant to theirs; and that in all things you were specially exemplary in humility, and none of you ever evaded the ministry, or went beyond the duties of your place; as also how willingly many hundreds of you submitted to church discipline, and in what comfortable order we did live. But it yet more comforteth me to remember what society I there had with humble, loving, peaceable, painful, faithful ministers of Christ; how lovingly and comfortably we met and conversed together; how readily, through the county, they consented first to the association and concord for the exercise of so much discipline as the Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independents were agreed in; and afterwards all to join in personal conference with, and catechising or instructing of all their people that consented. How free those ministers were from all heresy, schism, contention, and difference with one another,—never engaging themselves to any faction or dividing party, but holding communion with all true Christians on the terms of primitive simplicity, purity, and love! And it



comforteth me to hear of the patience and fidelity of those of them that still survive, and also of your own constancy, and that piety among you doth rather increase than decay."*

Before we conclude this sketch of Baxter's ministry at Kidderminster, we may remark that, in addition to the toils already mentioned, he was engaged in other multifarious avocations in the service of his Divine Master. During the period under review, his pen was employed in the production of several of those treatises which are comprised in his published works. These, he says, were his chief daily labour, which yet went the more slowly on, that he never one hour had an amanuensis to dictate to, and especially because his weakness took up so much of his time. The large collection of his epistolary papers, to which reference has been already made, presents a further monument of his industry. Yet what remains, we should infer, can form but a minor portion of the letters which were written by this marvellous scribe. To carry on such a correspondence as he did, one would think, was enough to fill up the chief portion of every day. His communications were not brief notes, such as we commonly write to our friends; but many of them elaborate treatises, covering several sheets. One letter to Matthew Poole, on Predestination, occupies sixteen folio pages, very closely written; and there are some letters much longer than even that. On turning over his papers, I found lengthened dissertations on Baptism, Church Government, Union, and the Interpretation of Prophecy. One person, who calls

* Baxter MSS.

himself a "Young Scholar, or Minister of the Gospel," writes to him for instruction, and begs him to send some arguments to prove the divinity of the Scriptures. Baxter sits down, and forthwith returns an extended answer, giving an outline of the principal evidences relating to that important subject. He seems to have been regarded as common property; and not only did divines at home and abroad consult him on theological topics, but pious people of all sorts wrote to him for advice. Cases of casuistry are proposed; spiritual difficulties are related; weak faith is deplored; guidance is sought respecting what Church should be joined—what ministers should be heard—what books should be read. It is beautiful to see the condescension, humility, patience, and love evinced in the replies furnished to these various applications. Inspired with missionary zeal, to an extent but little known in those days, he panted for the conversion of the heathen to Christ; and zealously co-operated in rendering assistance to Elliot, the Apostle to the Indians. Letters between Baxter and that distinguished missionary still exist, but they belong to a later period than is embraced in this chapter.*

For a man of robust health and an iron constitution to achieve what Baxter did, would be sufficient to inspire wonder; but the matter really becomes surpassingly marvellous, when we remember that he was

* Some of the letters allude to odd subjects. Supposed supernatural interferences greatly excited the curiosity of Baxter. "I heartily thank you," he says to one of his correspondents, "for your communication on the matter of apparitions and dead men's candles. We have a house three miles off, haunted with nightly knockings and walkings. We spent a day in prayer, and they were free for five or six months after that. Since, it is all as before."

constantly suffering from disease. In one of his letters he says, "I should take living upon the poorest scraps, with health, to be a princely life, or a voluptuous one, in comparison of my thirty-seven years' extraordinary constant pain and languor,"—a passage that which receives a most distressing elucidation from the details of his complicated disorders supplied in his own *Life*, edited by Sylvester. How ought the labours of the pastor of Kidderminster to rebuke the comparative indolence of many who call themselves the ministers of Christ! while the most diligent may find a spur to increasing devotedness in the perusal of his *Memoirs*, in which we have embodied the ideal which he sketched in his "Reformed Pastor."

The rising ministry will do well to study both the life and writings of this extraordinary man; nor can any object be so worthy of their regard, as the attainment of that holy, patient, devoted, and self-denying spirit which Baxter evinced, without which the professed minister of Christ, whatever mental and literary qualifications he may possess, is but as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

CHAPTER IX.

EAST ANGLIAN CHURCHES.

“To attend to the neglected and to remember the forgotten.”

BURKE.

IN a curious tract, entitled “Nashe’s Lenten Stuff, concerning the description and first procreation and increase of the town of Great Yarmouth, in Norfolk,” the author celebrates the praises of that ancient seaport in the most glowing terms. “I have not travelled far,” he observes, “though conferred with furtherst travellers from our own realms; I have turned over Venerable Bede, and plenteous bead-rolls of friary annals following on the back of him; Polydore Vergil, Buchanan, Camden’s Britannia, and most records of friends or enemies, I have searched as concerning the late model of it; none of the inland parts of it but I have treated them as frequently as the middle walk of St. Paul’s, or my way to bed every night; yet, for aught I have read, heard, or seen, Yarmouth, regal Yarmouth, of all maritime towns, that are no more but fisher towns, solely reigneth *sans peer*. Not anywhere is the word severelier practised, the preacher

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reverentlier observed and honoured, justice soundlier ministered, and a warlike people peaceablier demeanoured, between this and the Grand Cathay, and the strand of prester John." And in another part of this singular production the writer remarks, that "the city of Norwich fares never the worse for her; nor would fare so well, if it were not for the fish of all sorts that she cloyeth her with, and the fellowship of their haven, into which their three rivers infuse themselves, and through which their goods and merchandise from beyond seas are keeled up, with small cost, to their very thresholds, and so many good towns on this side and beyond." * Such was the manner in which this eccentric writer described the Yarmouth of the sixteenth century, and referred to the commercial interests which bound up the city of Norwich in amicable relations with her neighbour by the sea. To many of the inhabitants of the town, fifty years after, Nashe's laudation touching the practice of the word, and the reverence paid to the preacher, may be applied with still greater propriety; while as it regards the connexion of Yarmouth with the city of Norwich, circumstances had arisen to cement a friendship between them, more cordial and hallowed than any mercantile relations could have produced. Yarmouth was the first town in Norfolk in which a Church was formed in the Congregational way. The Church at Norwich was an offshoot from this; and the communities of faithful and devout men, gathered in the two places upon that principle, seem to have been as remarkable for the eminence of their piety, as for the priority of their origin among the

* Harleian Miscellany, vol. ii. pp. 301, 302.

Churches of the county, in point of time. The records preserved in their Church-Books are singularly ample and interesting, fully explaining their "first procreation and increase,"—to use old Nashe's phrase;—affording many picturesque illustrations of the proceedings of these worthies, together with some beautiful views of their Christian piety. They will supply materials for the present chapter.

The Yarmouth Church-Books begin by stating that certain persons had been driven by persecution into Holland, and had formed themselves into a Church at Rotterdam; among whom was the famous Mr. Bridge,* whom the people chose as "an officer of the Church." It is then remarked, that at the commencement of the sittings of the Long Parliament, divers of them returned to England; some of whom had previously lived in Norwich and Yarmouth. Restored to their own country, these persons wished to be united together in ecclesiastical fellowship, as they had been abroad.

The in-gathering of a Church was regarded in those days as a matter of the most solemn kind, calling for prayerful deliberation; and very many were the meetings which the brethren at Yarmouth held "to seek God, and advise together." And that they might proceed "decently and in order," and preserve, not a formal and stilted, but a spiritual and true succession of Christian Churches, they wrote to their brethren in Rotterdam for their assent; and received in reply a beautiful epistle, approving of their determination to incorporate themselves, and affectionately

* See p. 164.

“commending them to the sweet guidance of the Spirit of Christ, with earnest desires and prayers that truth and peace may be their portion.” The members, dismissed from the Church at Rotterdam by this primitive document, resided some in Yarmouth and some in Norwich; and as they at first wished to form but one Church, it became an anxious question where it should be settled. Numerous and earnest were the consultations respecting “the liberty and hope of increase” offered respectively by the two places; but they found it a difficult business, as they acknowledged, to see their way clear as to which of them “they should pitch upon.”—And well they might; for both of them at that time were in a most unsettled state. It was the year 1642; the civil war was just breaking out; both Norwich and Yarmouth were divided into factions; each party was anxious to anticipate the other in rendering the place of their abode a stronghold for their friends. The Parliamentarians had the ascendancy in both places, but they found it somewhat difficult to keep the Royalists in check.—Watches were set, scouts were sent out, and troops levied by the stronger party: they also planted their artillery in convenient places, laid up provisions in case they should be besieged, stopped the flight of the King’s partizans, and seized their horses, on which to mount their own cavalry. Such is the account given of Norwich at that time, by its diligent historian Bloomfield; and he also remarks, that “a great iron chain was lent to Yarmouth, to lay across the mouth of its harbour.”

While that part of Norfolk was in such an unsettled

state, and the cause of King and Parliament, of High Church domination and religious liberty, were thus trembling in the balance, no wonder these Congregational patriarchs of East Anglia found it a difficult problem to decide, whether they should pitch the Church's tent on the banks of the Wensum or at the mouth of the Yare. Apparently tired of the debate on the question, and hoping that Providence would shed some new light ere long upon their path, they determined to form the Church at once, without fixing upon the place in which it should permanently assemble. "After seeking God, they considered the manner of beginning the work of in-churching, and concluded that some of the brethren, whose hearts God stirred up to the work, should begin; and they judged ten or twelve to be a competent number."—Then follow the names of twelve persons who joined in this godly work, "moving" one another to it, as the quaint phraseology runs.

As might be expected, this community, as soon as it was formed, revived the question which had been placed for a while in abeyance; and after some time, "answer was given that Yarmouth was safer for the present;" and though the Norwich brethren thought their own city the preferable place, they gave way to the wishes of the rest. According to the custom of the early Congregational Churches, they then entered into a solemn covenant with each other, expressive of their religious views and their pious feelings, but not intended to be imposed upon any as a test of communion.

Though Yarmouth had been selected as the place of

meeting in general, the covenant was adopted and ratified at Norwich; and there, too, soon afterwards, the brethren met to elect Mr. Bridge as their first pastor. "After they had blessed God for his great love and gracious presence hitherto, and seeking his face for further assistance, he was, by the Church, ordained unto the pastor's office; and in the latter part of the day (being Lord's day) the Church did comfortably partake in both the Sacraments: the children of some of the members, and members' children of other Churches, were baptized."

As long as the community remained thus united, it appears that each section was wont to meet for religious worship on the Lord's day in their own place of abode, in some humble dwelling, probably, that has long since perished; but for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and for Church meetings, they were accustomed to congregate at Yarmouth. Along the old road, through Loddon, crossing the Waveny by St. Olave's Bridge, did this Puritan band from the manufacturing city wend their way, from time to time, to the maritime town, to share in the much-prized privilege of communion at the Lord's table. They counted the inconvenience of such a journey, in days when travelling twenty miles was a serious, and indeed dangerous business, not worth consideration, compared with the spiritual enjoyment they experienced at their journey's end. With religious conversation, and now and then the singing of a psalm, they would enliven the rather dreary road they traversed; and on reaching the houses of their brethren at Yarmouth, would be cheered by cordial greetings; and sitting down by the

blazing hearth of their warm-hearted hosts, would talk of the days of their exile, and how the Lord had turned again the captivity of Zion. The word of the Lord was precious in those days, and for a long time afterwards, in many parts of the country; and it was no uncommon thing for persons who valued the ordinances of religion to travel many miles in order to enjoy them. At Rothwell, in Northamptonshire, there is a tradition that several of the early Congregationalists, who worshipped there, came from some remote villages in the county, — starting on a winter's morning, before daybreak, and trudging along in the snow, with their lanterns, which, when the day dawned, they left at a cottage, midway on the road; whither they returned in the evening, and there kindling their lanterns afresh, they went on their way towards home, which sometimes they did not reach till the parish clock had sounded twelve.

When the plan of occasionally visiting Yarmouth had lasted for a while, the Congregationalists who resided in Norwich saw the desirableness of forming a distinct Church, to which their former companions assented: the separation, however, was effected with mutual regret, inasmuch as the parties had become attached to each other, the more strongly from their having spent some years together in a foreign land. A beautiful letter from Norwich has been preserved, in which the separation is proposed; and also the answer from Yarmouth, in which the mother Church, with touching simplicity, thus expresses the feelings with which she dismissed some of her children from her immediate fellowship:—"We cannot count it a

small affliction, after so long while communion, now to be severed one from another. We could lament over the loss we have, when we consider the parting with your actual communion, for it was sweet unto us. But yet we dare not so much respect ourselves as to forget the glory of God. But seeing the Lord hath need of you to do his work, in this respect we give you up, that Jesus Christ may have the more of you. We desire with you to learn to submit to the will of God, and to say, with the disciples, when Paul had his revelation to go up to Jerusalem, 'The will of the Lord be done.'"

Very large additions were speedily made to the number of the Church at Norwich; as many as twelve in one month being admitted to their communion: and when it is remembered that Congregationalism had not yet become popular, and that great caution, as appears from the ecclesiastical documents of the period, was used in the admission of candidates, such a large and rapid increase betokens the blessing of God on the efforts of this infant community, for the diffusion of their principles. The Church at Yarmouth also received considerable additions; but at an early period, it appears that the Presbyterian party, who were predominant in the town, viewed with no small jealousy the proceedings of Mr. Bridge and the Congregationalists. Sir Edward Owner, who represented Yarmouth in the Long Parliament, and was an alderman, bailiff, and justice of the peace, in short, a very great man in the town, and withal a staunch Presbyterian, waited, on the 2nd of February, 1646, in company with Mr. Whitefield, who was one of the parish minis-

ters, upon Mr. Bridge, to express their sore displeasure at his gathering a Church after the Congregational method. So powerful were their expostulations, and so decided was the opposition of the town authorities to the measure, that the pastor and his friends, who mingled caution with their zeal, came to the resolution, "that for a time they should forbear to receive any into their fellowship, until they gave notice to the town that they could forbear no longer." But this restraint was a burden which they could endure only two months; and on the 16th of April they resolved to throw off this yoke; and it is recorded that the Church gave the town notice that they could no longer forbear the duty of admitting into fellowship.

After this very short suspension of their aggressive efforts, they proceeded with vigour to maintain and enforce their principles; and the Church-Book bears witness to their success in the numerous additions recorded on its pages. The constitution of the Church is fully developed in its interesting memorials. It had its pastor in the person of Mr. Bridge, who, from his engagements in London, where he frequently preached, and attended the consultations of the Westminster Assembly, must have been often absent from his flock. His lack of service was supplied by an associate in the ministry, called a Teacher,—an officer whom we very commonly find mentioned in the early history of Congregationalism. It is difficult to determine the exact nature of his functions. The distinction between pastor and teacher seems to have been chiefly nominal; and "where there was any real difference, it was such as arose from the arbitrary or prudential determina-

tions of the respective Churches in which they served, rather than from any declaration made in the New Testament concerning them." * In addition to the office of teacher, the Yarmouth Church had its ruling elders; in which respect their organization partook somewhat of the Presbyterian cast, as did other Congregational Churches in those days. The ruling elder was distinguished from the preaching elder, by his not being permitted to teach, assist in ordinations, baptize, or administer the Lord's Supper. Mr. Bridge held this office in high esteem; and it is reported in the Church-Book that he said, "Then we are in our beauty, when the brethren prophesy one by one, and when we have ruling elders." He was also an advocate for the permanence of the office of deaconesses, or widows; and accordingly the Church met for the choosing of widows, or deaconesses, and, with consent, "our sister, Alice Burgesse, was elected; and then, for a second, after some debate, sister Joanna Ames was chosen for another." Deacons, of course, were appointed; and thus, according to Mr. Bridge's view of what a Church should be, the Congregationalists of Yarmouth attained a complete ecclesiastical organization. Most zealous were the efforts of that good man to preserve his people in fraternal love and active co-operation, especially in the matter of prophesying; but though his flock seem to have been happily free from contention and strife, they did not meet his wishes in reference to the exercise of their gifts, for "the Thursday meeting, at four of the clock," for that purpose, seems to have been sadly neglected: wherefore the good man "admonished

* Harmer's Miscellaneous Works, p. 196.

the brethren not to let go the exercise of prophecy for two reasons; first, that else the saints and Churches would look on us as declined; and secondly, that else our gifts would dry up, and prove unprofitable." At the meetings of the Church, painful cases of inconsistency in the members sometimes called for the exercise of discipline, which appears to have been administered with firmness, yet with prudence and delicacy. On the dismissal to some other Church of an old and cherished fellow-member, there was a gush of warm affection which could not be satisfied with granting a mere formal certificate of consistency. "Our Brother Staffe's desire for his dismissal," it is recorded in the minutes, "was renewed by our Brother Gidney. The brethren desired rather that he would come down, for they had something to communicate unto him, *and that our parting might not be with bare paper.*" When other persons in the county or neighbourhood, having embraced Congregational principles, applied to Norwich or Yarmouth for advice, and for the recognition of their Churches as fraternal communities, much care was exercised in deliberation on such matters; nothing like rash zeal is evinced. Combining "love, power, and a sound mind," (that precious triple band of virtues,) the brethren encouraged the formation of Churches only where it was apparent that they would possess the means to support and perpetuate the cause. Various weighty matters from time to time were submitted to them, not for decision, for they formed no court of appeal, but for brotherly advice. From distant places the Church at Yarmouth received occasional applications for counsel; for on the 27th January, 1657, it is

recorded that "the Church this day received a letter from several Churches in Kent about some questions what to do concerning a Church among them, the greater part of them fallen to *Arminianisme*, which the Church took some time to consider of." When pastors were less numerous than the churches, and a keen though Christian struggle for the services of some eminent minister was being carried on, many knotty points came before the assembled brethren, and put their judgment and prudence to the test; the frequency of such application being, no doubt, attributable to the position and influence of Mr. Bridge, whose piety, wisdom, and experience rendered him the Congregational Patriarch of East Anglia. Sometimes his personal services were applied for by neighbouring Churches; and, on one occasion, the Norwich brethren crave his presence for a month or six weeks to help them in their necessities, which the Yarmouth people are obliged to refuse, because "Mr. Tuky, the teacher, is gone abroad," and they cannot spare Mr. Bridge so long; yet, if a day or two will help, they are willing, though it be to their loss; but even for this short time, they cannot part with him without the proviso, "that they do send us help." The Yarmouth community, however, was anything but selfish. With a large-hearted benevolence, they felt for the cause of Christian truth in every place, and again and again decreed a Mr. Cushen and a Mr. Shepherd, or some other good brother, to go as messenger to certain towns to help in the work of God. Nor was pecuniary assistance withheld from those who were in need; for when the Church at Bury was reduced to straits, it was ordered at Yar-

mouth "that the deacons should gather of the brethren what they pleased, the which was done, and nine pounds four shillings was gathered." A general conference of Churches in the neighbourhood was occasionally held, for the discussion of questions of general interest; of which a remarkable example occurs in 1655, when a fraternal letter was addressed by the Church at Norwich to their brethren in the surrounding district, inviting them to meet "at the house of our Brother Timothy *Norwich*,* at Tombland," that they might come to a clear understanding relative to the reign of Christ, and the duty of saints towards the governments of the world,—theological points which then excited peculiar interest in the country, owing to the increase of the Fifth Monarchy men. To this meeting the Yarmouth Church sent delegates, who brought back a report of the conclusion at which the Norfolk divines and their lay associates had arrived. It is stated that, with regard to whether there should be a kingdom of Christ visible or personal here on earth, "the conclusion was, on the general vote of the messengers, that there should be in the latter days a glorious and visible kingdom of Christ, wherein the saints should rule; and to the second question, whether we should be subject to the present powers of the world, the general vote of all the messengers of the Church was, that it was our duty to give subjection; and if any should do otherwise, it should be a matter of grief and great offence unto them." Without assuming the authority of council, assembly, or synod, they

* This is probably an error. In the Yarmouth Book, it is said they were to meet at Mr. Norris's house in Tombland.

thus publicly expressed their opinion upon a great theological and practical question, the effect of which was likely to be instructive and salutary, at a time when the views of many were extremely unsettled, and fanatical delusions on the matters referred to extensively prevailed.

While the Congregationalists of that day thoroughly understood the Presbyterian controversy, and fought it out with intelligence and courage,—while they were decidedly averse to courts of ecclesiastical legislation and judicature,—they were not afraid of their liberties being at all endangered by a friendly conference of delegates, and a publication of the opinion given by such an assembly. But of all the meetings recorded in the volume before me, there are none which are calculated to excite so deep an interest as those which were held for strictly devotional purposes. When any difficult subject was introduced, the brethren immediately betook themselves to prayer. Matters relating simply to their own Church, or matters of great ecclesiastical or national importance, brought these pious people on their knees, and kept them for hours prostrate before the throne of grace. “This day was spent in seeking God,” is a kind of entry that frequently occurs. National events were specially noticed. When, in the year 1651, such momentous results depended on the progress of the army in Scotland, and Cromwell was sorely ill at Edinburgh, these men, who trusted more in the arm of Heaven than in the “battle of the warrior,” fervently united in the public fast and humiliation. When Admiral Blake encountered the Dutch Fleet in the Downs, in

November 1652, and suffered a defeat, and the brave but vain-glorious Van Tromp, with a broom at his topmast, sailed through the Channel, threatening to sweep the seas of the English flag, keen was the distress of our praying friends at Yarmouth, who perhaps had relatives on board some of Blake's ships, and had seen his flotillas careering through the Roads; and "on the 7th December they agreed, that on Thursday following, at ten of the clock, the Church should meet to seek God for the navy at sea." When the town was threatened with the plague, their refuge was the same; when breaches and divisions occurred in other Churches, or seemed to threaten their own,—which evils they feared more than the plague,—they had recourse to the same method of relief; and when they lost brave old Oliver, the shield of their religious liberty, they record the following touching resolution:—"The Lord having caused a great change of providence to pass upon this nation, in taking away the late Lord Protector, the Church appointed the 19th instant, in the afternoon, to be spent in seeking the Lord for the settlement of the nation, and for humbling our souls before the Lord for our sins, as they have had a hand in the same: the meeting to begin at two of the clock." The time for ridiculing such persons as mean-souled fanatics, for raising a laugh at their favourite expression of "seeking the Lord," to which many of them attached the sublimest scriptural conceptions, has now almost entirely gone by; and the worthies of the Church at Yarmouth, who entered so deeply into the spirit of the Apostle's injunction, "praying always," need no vindication from the humble pen which has

here traced, from their own records, a simple memorial of their devout intercessions.

It is time to notice the relation in which Mr. Bridge and other Norfolk ministers stood to the civil government. Previously to our doing so, a few general observations on the position of Church and State during this singular period of English history may be desirable.

A civil establishment of religion, of a remarkable kind, existed throughout the Commonwealth. Christianity was not left solely to the voluntary principle for support, but a part of the old revenues of the Church, and also grants of public money, were appropriated for the purpose. Yet the Establishment then was so entirely different from what it had been before, and what it afterwards became, that the term scarcely conveys a correct idea of the state of things which it is employed to designate. Had the original idea of the Presbyterians been carried out, an establishment of their own order, like the Church of Scotland, would have been the result, and all religionists except themselves would have been excluded from the protection and maintenance afforded by the State: but they were prevented from effecting their object by the growing influence of more liberal parties,—and the consequence was, that under the Protectorate a scheme of comprehension obtained; and though the Presbyterians formed the greatest number of those who were supported by the State, ministers of other denominations were permitted to share in its emoluments. Papists, of course, were excluded; and, in accordance with the common prejudice of the age, and which till

of late prevailed among Protestants, were denied toleration. The supporters of Prelacy, partly on political accounts, were also placed under a ban, and the Litany was forbidden to be read in public; but all other Protestants, holding what were deemed orthodox opinions, might come under the wing of this wide-spreading Establishment. An agreement in the fundamental truths of Christianity, together with the possession of personal piety and adequate ministerial gifts, were the only requisites demanded of those who sought to enjoy ecclesiastical benefices. Triers were appointed by the Government to ascertain the qualifications of ministers; and though ridicule in abundance has been poured upon the proceedings of these men, it has been proved that, on the whole, they discharged their duty with rectitude and prudence. Baxter, whose independence and integrity of judgment on such matters is universally admitted, acknowledges that these commissioners did abundance of good to the Church. No doubt there were instances in which conscientious High Churchmen were roughly dealt with,—and persons who thus suffered wrong for the sake of principle are deserving of honour,—yet, for the most part by far, the men whom the triers excluded had, by their scandalous lives, proved themselves utterly unfit for the holy office they had assumed.

In this comprehensive kind of establishment many Independents were included. They were rectors and vicars of parishes, city lecturers, and preachers in cathedrals. These good men did not seem to see the inconsistency, which is so apparent to us, between their principles of Church government and the ac-

ceptance, in any form, of State support. The unshackled liberty which was then allowed them, in carrying out their own system of ecclesiastical polity and discipline, rendered them insensible to the real nature of their position as dependents on the civil power, and to the evils which eventually such a position must be found to involve. The exercise of Government control is naturally and necessarily connected with the bestowment of Government support. The two things may, in a measure, be parted for a while, under extraordinary circumstances, and in unsettled times, as was the case during the Commonwealth, but they are certain, sooner or later, to become united again, and then the ecclesiastical beneficiaries of the State are made to feel they are its servants too. This crisis no doubt would have arrived sooner or later, had the Commonwealth lasted; and then Independents would have been taught by experience the incompatibility of their principles with the acceptance of pecuniary support from Government. Certainly no establishment of so comprehensive a character, and so tolerant a spirit, ever existed before. Cromwell, who, as Lord Protector, was placed at its head, drew around him men of different denominations, and divided among them his favours. Though he was most attached to the Independents, he also employed Presbyterians in his service. Manton prayed at his inauguration; Baxter preached at court; and Calamy was admitted to his councils. Moderate Episcopalians and Baptists, as well as Presbyterians and Independents, might be found in the pulpits of the parish-churches; and in some parts of England there were county associations,

in which ministers of several denominations assembled for fraternal conference and prayer. The spirit of his Highness led him indignantly to inquire of the Parliament, which he dissolved in 1654, "Is it ingenuous to ask liberty, and not to give it? What greater hypocrisy than for those who were oppressed by bishops to become the greatest oppressors themselves, as soon as their yoke was removed!" This noble sentiment he strove to carry out, and was ready to grant religious liberty to all whose sentiments were not inimical to the civil government, and dangerous to the peace of the community. Episcopacy and Popery were suppressed under the idea of their being at that time so inimical and dangerous, yet there were supporters of both systems whom the Protector generously befriended. He treated Brownrigg, Bishop of Exeter, with great respect; saved Dr. Barnard's life, and made him his almoner; invited Archbishop Usher to visit him,—evinced a warm and sincere regard for his virtues,—and when that excellent prelate died, commanded his interment in Westminster Abbey, and contributed two hundred pounds to his funeral. Even Romanists themselves were kindly treated, if they conducted themselves with propriety. Sir Kenelm Digby, a well-known Catholic, was lodged by Cromwell at Whitehall, and the penal laws against Popish priests were sometimes suspended under his hand and seal. "I should think my heart not an honest one," observes Sir Kenelm, in a letter to Secretary Thurlow, "if the blood about it were not warmed with any the least imputation upon my respects and duty to his Highness, to whom I owe so much."

In the records of the Yarmouth Corporation, Mr. Bridge is referred to as the town preacher,—an office which he continued to hold till he was silenced after the Restoration. Mr. Brinsley and Mr. Whitefield, who were Presbyterians, are also described in these records as “our Ministers.” But soon after the death of Charles I., it was thought desirable that the number of town ministers should be increased to four; whereupon Mr. Tillinghurst,* who was associated with Mr. Bridge as teacher in the Congregational Church, was appointed to the office. Upon Mr. Tillinghurst’s removal, Mr. Tuky was chosen. Hence there appear to have been two of the publicly-recognised preachers or lecturers of the town who were of the Presbyterian class, and two who held “the Independent way,” as it was termed,—an instance illustrative of the character of the Commonwealth Establishment. Mr. Bridge was evidently a popular preacher, and was high in favour with the ruling powers. As early as the 17th May, 1648, he was appointed to preach before the House of Commons, at the public thanksgiving for the great victory obtained in Wales; for which Miles Corbett, who was representative for Yarmouth, and a member of Bridge’s Church, was desired by the House to present their thanks. Frequently do we find him preaching in London at the parish-churches on particular occasions; and from the entries in the Yarmouth Church-Book, it appears that, in November 1649, he was invited by the Council of State to become their Chaplain, at a salary of 200*l.* a-year, “his work to preach once a-week on Lord’s days,”

* See Note [26].

—an offer which, after much consideration, he declined.

The spacious church of St. Nicholas, that fine old building, which affords an interesting study for the architectural antiquary, was so arranged during the Commonwealth as to accommodate the two denominations to which the town lecturers belonged. The Presbyterians occupied the nave of the church. The building was stripped of all vestiges of Popery; the royal arms were displaced to make way for those of the Commonwealth; a table in the aisle was substituted for the altar; the Prayer-Book and surplice were banished. Civic processions no longer attended at the great festivals; Presbyterian simplicity reigned throughout the old gothic edifice. The hymn of praise ascended to God not less acceptable from its being unaccompanied by the peal of the organ; and many a discourse full of sound scriptural instruction was delivered by good Mr. Brinsley in his Genevan cloak. His Congregational brother, who lived with him on the most friendly terms, and who exerted his influence on his behalf, when, during the Protectorate, he was in danger of being ejected, was accommodated at the same time within the walls of the same building. In January 1650, it was proposed to the Corporation that the north aisle of the church should be fitted up for a distinct place of worship; but a committee being appointed to consider the matter, it was at length concluded that the chancel "would be much more convenient for the purpose," and that "it should be closed in with main walls where needful, and fitted up for a church-house." An expense of 900*l.* was incurred by the entire alterations

of the church, which when complete appear to have afforded distinct and commodious places of worship for the two congregations; so that the Presbyterian and Congregational preachers could simultaneously minister under the same roof. Little difference, if any, was discernible in the mode of worship adopted by these worthy men; but their principles of Church government kept them apart so far as their clerical ministrations were concerned, though they entertained for each other a sincere regard and affection. The Congregational minister at Yarmouth seems to have stood, ecclesiastically, in a double relation,—one to the civil government, as a paid official for the public instruction of the people of the town,—another to the Church gathered out of the town upon those principles of Independent polity which he was known to advocate. The proceedings of the Church over which Mr. Bridge presided were altogether uncontrolled by any influence on the part of the Corporation, or the Council of State, or the Protector, or any other secular authority, and were altogether as unfettered as the proceedings of any voluntary association. It was not, I apprehend, as the pastor of a Congregational Church that he was supported by the State, but as one of the town preachers; and though I by no means intend to justify or excuse the anomalous position occupied by this excellent person, it is of importance to state what that position appears to have been, as it no doubt resembled that of a considerable number of his brethren.

At first a rate was levied on the town for the support of the ministry; but in the year 1647 Mr. Miles Corbett procured from the Committee for the revenues

of Ejected Ministers an appropriation of 32*l.*, reserved rent of the Dean and Chapter, which was paid but for a short time. In 1650 Mr. Isaac Preston and Mr. Bendish (who married Oliver Cromwell's eccentric grand-daughter), both members of the Congregational Church, were deputed to wait on Mr. Corbett, to procure his interest with the Government for some assistance towards the support of the town ministers; in which application he seems to have been so far successful as to obtain a salary of 100*l.* for Mr. Bridge, paid out of the impropriations. In 1651 an application was made to Parliament for an Act to authorize the levy of a rate on the parish for raising 300*l.* a-year for the rest of the Ministers, and a farther sum for the repairs of the church; an Act for the support of Ministers at Ipswich being chosen as a model. It is probable that this scheme was never accomplished, as no farther mention is made of it; and an order occurs four months afterwards, that the charge of maintaining the Ministers of the Presbyterian Congregation should be paid by the parishioners belonging to that Congregation, and not out of the town's stock. Subsequent attempts were made at rating the town for the maintenance of the ministry, but these were resisted by Mr. Bridge and his associate Mr. Tuky. They disowned it, "as being against the way^e of the Gospel, and also as destructive to the Church; whereupon the Church desired that none of the brethren might have any hand in the acting of the same." The ground of their conclusion they do not state. Was it that they distinguished between taxation for the support of religion, and the appropriation of existing Church reve-

nues for religious purposes,—objecting to the former, but acquiescing in the latter?

From a perusal of the Corporation Records of Norwich, I have discovered some farther illustrations of the plans proposed during the Commonwealth for the support of the City Ministers, among whom were both Presbyterians and Independents. As early as 1643 a scheme was projected for uniting together several of the numerous parishes in that large city, and for seeking the appropriation of the revenues of the Dean and Chapter for the support of “an able ministry.” In 1646 allusion is made to 300*l.* out of such revenues voted by the Committee of Parliament; and one Mr. Clarke, to whom the united parishes of Simon and Jude, George Tombland, and Peter of Hungate, were offered, was promised 20*l.* per annum, as long as he might continue minister of those parishes. Three years afterwards, reference is made to preparing a petition to Parliament for power to raise a sum of money upon houses and personal estate throughout the city for the maintenance of an able ministry. Subsequently it was resolved that such monies as should be raised should be brought into a public stock, and that the Ministers of the Union should be paid out of the same. How far these schemes were accomplished does not appear. For the payment of the City Lecturers, who received 20*l.* a quarter, it was resolved that the money given by benefactors should be employed, and that when the Corporation were better able they would augment the salary. But here a difficulty arose. These famous sermons used to be preached in the Cathedral, or in the greenyard on the north side

by the Bishop's palace,—the only places in Catholic times where sermons were preached to the Norwich citizens, and where subsequently the Corporation, in civic pomp, with the Dean and the Prebendaries, and their wives, and hosts of people beside, paying a half-penny or a penny a-piece for sitting on the forms, were wont to assemble. But the Puritan party at Norwich not liking the Cathedral, and indeed going so far as to contemplate the sale of the fine old Norman structure for the benefit of the poor, arranged that the City Lectures should be delivered in the yard adjoining St. Andrew's Hall, or in the Dutch church, which is connected with that edifice. Hence, according to Sir Thomas Browne, "the heirs of the benefactors denied to pay the wonted beneficence for any sermon out of Christ's Church (the Cathedral now being commonly so called), and some other ways were found to provide a minister at a yearly salary to preach every Sunday."* Some expenses were incurred in fitting up the new places of worship for the civic body; and it is curious to notice in the Corporation-books how it was "ordered, that the Mayor, Sheriffs, and Aldermen should every of them lend 40*s.* a man, and every of the Common Council 20*s.* a man, and every Liveryman likewise shall be moved to lend 20*s.* a man, for the building of the seats in the Dutch chapel for the Corporation and their wives." It is prudently added, "If any man will *give* half rather than *lend* the whole, let it be accepted."

Mr. Allen, an Independent minister, was for some time the regular City Lecturer at the Dutch church.

* Sir Thomas Browne's Works, vol. iv. p. 28.

Mr. Armitage, of the same denomination, appears, at an earlier period, to have been employed in occasionally preaching before the Norwich Corporation. Fast and thanksgiving sermons were very common in those days. Allusions to some of the latter, especially, occur in the Norwich records; from which it appears that there was no want of pomp and ceremony on the part of the civic authorities when, on public occasions, they appeared before their fellow-citizens. Strict are the injunctions given, "that the Aldermen be in their scarlet, the Sheriffs in violet, and that the Livery do attend upon the sword in their gowns and tippets;" and that these municipal dignitaries were careful not to lose any of the majesty that pertains to the mantle, is farther apparent from the old portraits in the Mayor's Council Chamber, where Mr. Barnard Church, and others of the Corporation, of the Puritan school, are to be seen in deep red cloaks, with embroidered scarfs, and a full complement of lace on the collar. Nor were they indifferent to their comfort while listening to the sermon, as appears from an order for twenty-six cushions, with the city arms embroidered on them, for the Mayor and Aldermen's seats. The firing of guns formed a part of the public proceedings on these gala days, and the whole ceremonial seems to have been conducted with much state. The best part of the affair was the collection for the poor, which was diligently made from house to house.

As one muses over the Corporation Records in the Mayor's Chamber in the Norwich Guildhall, with its windows richly stained, its walls garnished with grave-looking portraits, its oaken benches finely carved and

richly cushioned, it requires no strong effort of the imagination to picture the Corporation of the city during the Commonwealth assembling in that venerable apartment, and there marshalled in procession, with due regard to the injunctions entered in the minute-books. Forthwith, accompanying his worship, and attended by the sword-bearer, the city trumpeters, and other civic officers, the whole party proceed to move in stately order through the streets, making a due impression upon the gazing and spectacle-loving crowds by their gowns, tippets, and other paraphernalia. Winding along London-lane, while many a face, peering out of the overhanging windows of the timber-built dwellings, gives a nod of friendly recognition to one and another of the corporate train, they pass down towards St. Andrew's Hall, and enter within the gates of the Dutch church, where, occupying the seats prepared for the worshipful assembly, some of them having their wives lovingly placed by their side, they listen with becoming decorum to the sermon which is delivered by the worthy Master Allen, the City Lecturer. The service done, the guns fired, and all the public ceremonies ended, we follow the Mayor to his residence; some straggling kind of house, with a quadrangular court, into which you enter through an arched gateway, surmounted by a merchant's mark,—that quaint device interweaving the initials of the wealthy occupant; and guarded also by stately posts, one on either side,—symbols these in our city of Norwich, indicating that the inhabitant of the mansion has attained to the highest office in the Corporation, and commonly called the Mayor's posts. There his worship, with a few

friends, and the reverend lecturer, ascend the steps to the entrance hall, with its flag-stone pavement and its staircase of polished oak; and then they are duly ushered by the servants in waiting into a handsome withdrawing-room, which exhibits an abundant supply of chairs, tables, cabinets, and chests, rather heavy and lumbering it is true, but withal curiously fashioned, and rather profusely carved. Conducted to the large dining-room, which wears an air of enticing comfort, as the blazing fire fills the ample breadth of the fireplace, cheerfully lighting up the sombre walls, and displaying to advantage the quaintly-adorned ceiling, the party seat themselves at the well-spread table, when Master Allen says grace with great solemnity, and at rather greater length than perhaps now-a-days we are wont to hear. The conversation, though seasoned with religious sentiment, and marked now and then by a rather peculiar and affected phraseology, is far from being pervaded by a melancholy spirit, but sparkles occasionally with sallies of humour, or sinks into innocent and cheerful chit-chat. If these good people have not that marvellous capacity for quaffing cups of sack upon which some of their contemporaries so much pride themselves, and if they have some scruples about the practice of drinking healths, yet they are as far removed from asceticism as from excess: they know how to use the gifts of Providence without abusing them; and while sipping their wine with moderation, delight much more in "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." And if before the party break up a psalm be devoutly sung, and Mr. Allen calls for the Bible, and expounds a chapter, and then engages in

prayer, commending the chief magistrate of the city and the government of the country to the guidance and blessing of God, perhaps this will be regarded by the reader as no unseemly conclusion of a rational entertainment, though it might in those days call forth the ridicule of the boisterous Cavalier, who preferred a jest-book to the Bible, and the singing of licentious songs to the chaunting the praises of God.

If any one wish to have a peep into the house of a wealthy Puritan on ordinary occasions, and to know what the footmen had to do in the service of such a worshipful lady as Mistress Mayoress, or the dames of some of the officers about Cromwell's Court at Whitehall, Joseph Lister, in his amusing Historical Narrative, will give sufficient information. "My mistress," he says, "told me what my employment should be; viz., to wait upon her at table, bring the table-cloth, and spread it, lay on the trenchers, salt and bread; then set her a chair, and bring the first dish to the table; then desire her to sit down, and so wait till she called for beer, or any other thing; then to fetch another dish, and clean the trenchers, and so wait upon her till she had done; then to take off and draw the table, and carry away her seat; then the two maids and myself to feed on what she had left, and to wait on her to hear sermons almost every day. I always wrote the sermon, and repeated it; and as I did at noon, so I did at night, at supper, and then all my work was done; and this was my business day after day." Nor were the Puritan dames indifferent to the dress of their footmen; for honest Joseph Lister tells us that his mistress gave him, on entering her service, a hat, bands,

doublet, coat, breeches, stockings, and shoes, a cloak, and half-a-dozen pair of cuffs, saying, "Whatever I give you at the year's end, you shall have these things freely given you."*

Dismissing these reminiscences of Puritan times and manners, we must search once more into the records of the Congregational Church at Yarmouth. We catch some glimpses of ecclesiastical proceedings of public interest, in which the brethren at Yarmouth took a share. It appears that, in September of 1658, the prospect of the meeting at the Savoy, for publishing a declaration of the faith and order of Congregational Christians, excited considerable attention and discussion in the community; and that forthwith Mr. Bridge was despatched as a messenger to the Assembly, and, if necessary, Mr. George Fryer and Mr. Thomas Dunn were to assist him in his mission. The Palace of the Savoy, once the abode of John of Gaunt, had in ancient times gathered round it many a chivalrous association; and as the wayfarer of the seventeenth century travelled along the ill-paved road in the Strand, or more pleasantly floated down the highway of the Thames, amidst barges of pleasure and boats of merchandise, he would pause to muse upon those grey walls, and think of its romantic scenes and stories; but of late it had gathered round it associations of a new class, as a place set apart for the business of the Commonwealth, and the steps by the river-side had been not a little worn by the feet of courtiers and mes-

* Joseph Lister's Narrative, pp. 32, 34. A curious piece of autobiography illustrative of Puritan times. He came from Yorkshire, and lived in some wealthy families in London as footman.

sengers passing to and fro between the offices of the Savoy and the palace of my Lord Protector at Whitehall. It was now to be employed for a religious purpose, which has rendered it somewhat celebrated in the ecclesiastical annals of our country. There, on the 29th of September, two hundred ministers and lay delegates, Mr. Bridge among the number, assembled to confer upon the publication of a statement of their creed and polity, which ended in drawing up the well-known Savoy Declaration. Their object was different from that of the persons who drew up the Thirty-nine Articles, and of those who framed the Westminster Confession. The brethren at the Savoy desired to issue a manifesto, not a test; to form a symbol, not a standard. The document they published is very long, and goes much into detail: but a habit of over-doing everything in such matters was the fault of the age; and the worthies employed would have thought they were slurring their work, if they had not spread it over the surface of a goodly number of quarto pages. The doctrinal portions are in accordance with the Westminster Confession, and, for the most part, are couched in the same terms. With regard to ecclesiastical polity, it is affirmed that members of Churches are to be such only as, in the judgment of charity, are believers in Christ; that ministers are to be elected by the people; and that each Church is an independent organization. Yet were the members of the Savoy meeting by no means extravagant in their notions of Independency. They could distinguish between Church Courts having coercive powers, and associations having only that moral weight to support their decisions

which known wisdom and piety might supply. They did not wish to see each Church in a state of perfect isolation, and jealous of every species of interference, but sought rather to encourage the habit of submitting cases of difference for the opinion of those whom age and intelligence might qualify to be the advisers of their brethren. Nor did they require as a test of Christian communion anything more than a credible profession of faith and piety, and the maintenance of a blameless reputation. Emancipated from the thralldom of narrow views on this vital point, the Independents proclaimed themselves the enlightened friends of thorough-going union. *Uniformity* they sought not to promote; they had read the history of the Church too well to believe it was practicable; they had read the Bible too well to believe it was the grand thing designed by Jesus Christ: but *union* they did endeavour to advance, regarding it as capable of being attained and devoutly to be wished. And, especially, it should be remarked, that the Savoy Declaration asserts the duty of mutual indulgence among Christians, and that there is no warrant for the magistrate to abridge them of their liberty. The delegates affirm that, if they had all the power which any of their brethren of different opinions had desired to have over them or others, they would freely grant this liberty to them all.* It must be confessed, however, on examining the document, that the members of the Savoy meeting contended for this liberty as the inheritance of the saint, rather than the inheritance of the citizen. It seems, in their view, to have been a religious boon to be conceded to certain

* See Savoy Declaration, pref.

classes, not as an indefeasible right belonging to all men. They did not appear to apprehend that religious liberty is only another name for civil liberty, designating an important branch of that freedom of which no magistrate can justly deprive his subjects,—namely, freedom from restraint in all such modes of action as do not interfere with the rights of others; in a word, the freedom of each consistently with the freedom of all.

Further illustrations of the ecclesiastical views of some leading Independents are afforded in a subsequent part of the Yarmouth records, as well as an insight into some of the political movements of the day. After the accession of Richard to the Protectorate, it is well known that a formidable opposition to his Government arose from a large section of the army. Ludlow describes it as broken up into three factions; of which one was devoted to the Protector; another was in favour of a pure republic; and the third, headed by Fleetwood and others, called, from their place of meeting, the Wallingford House party. The latter do not appear to have been pure republicans, but, dissatisfied with Richard, they coalesced with the republican section, and sought and accomplished the overthrow of the existing Government. There seems to have been a Congregational Church assembling in Wallingford House, who, probably under the influence of Fleetwood, sought the counsel of other Churches on the political questions of those unsettled times. A communication for the purpose was despatched to Yarmouth, and “the Church at Wallingford House desired advice as to what they apprehended was needful for the Commonwealth.” The brethren at Yarmouth con-

sidered it, and then wisely and prudently "ordered the elders to write to them, thanking them for their love and care of them, and also desiring to give the right hand of fellowship with them; but *concerning civil business, the Church, as a Church, desire not to meddle.*"

As the grand question of religious liberty was so much involved in the political agitations of the time, a careful abstinence from expressing any opinion on matters of government by ecclesiastical communities, however desirable, was more than could be expected. Accordingly, meetings of Congregational ministers and laymen were held to deliberate on some of the great questions which absorbed the public mind. Mr. Allen desired a meeting at Norwich, to which Mr. Bridge and Mr. Bendish were sent as delegates; and shortly afterwards, a meeting was held in London, respecting which Dr. Owen wrote to the Yarmouth pastor. This appears from the Church-Book, which also reports certain resolutions in reference to the matters in debate; and since they are of importance, and, as far as I am aware, have never been published, they are now subjoined, with a few remarks. It is true they were adopted at the meeting of a single Church, and therefore are by no means set forth as an authorized declaration of the body; yet, as Mr. Bridge was the pastor, and an influential man in the denomination, and probably drew up the resolutions, there can be no doubt that the opinions expressed were shared in by many,—of which, indeed, there is sufficient evidence in the writings of other distinguished Independents.

"1659, December 28th.—The Church having met, Mr. Bridge made a report of what was done by the

messengers of the Churches at London, and these four things offered as the result of their own thoughts:—

“*First.* We judge a Parliament to be the expedient for the peace of these nations; and withal we do desire that due care be taken that the Parliament be such as may preserve the interest of Christ and his people in these nations.”

This resolution refers to what might well be deemed throughout England the question of questions,—“What government shall we have?” for poor England, just then, had no government at all. The Long Parliament, whose tenacious life was a strange phenomenon, had now, after repeated resuscitations, been once more put into a state of suspended animation, to resume, however, its vital functions again at the bidding of its magical superiors. The supreme power devolved on the army: a revolution was beginning again,—all was confusion: each limb of the body politic was out of joint; and the cry was, “How shall it be set?” Ludlow informs us, some were for a select standing senate, to be joined to the representatives; others laboured to have the supreme authority to consist of an assembly chosen by the people, and a council of state chosen by that assembly: some were desirous to have a representative of the people constantly sitting; others, smitten with the love of Greek precedents, asked that there might be joined to the popular assembly a number of persons, after the fashion of the Lacedæmonian Ephori, who should have a veto on matters involving the essentials of government. Another section were of opinion, that it would be most conducive to the public happiness to have two councils chosen by the people, cor-

sisting, the one of three hundred, the other of one hundred members; the former to debate, the latter to resolve; something like the tribunate and legislative bodies in the scheme of the great French constitution-maker, M. Sieyes.*

It was amidst such confusion, such terrors, such cries, articulate and inarticulate, and such inability on the part of those who, in this night of darkness, had attempted to guide the ship through the rude storm—now that the brave old pilot Cromwell was gone—that some of the Independents lifted up their voices, and, English like, called for a Parliament as the only remedy. Whether they meant by that, the evoking of the defunct Long Parliament from the shades, or the calling of a new one, does not appear; at any rate, their hopes centred in a Parliament, provided it were a godly one, devoted to “the interests of Christ and his people.”

“Secondly. As touching the magistrate’s power in matters of faith and worship, we have declared our judgment in our late Confession; and though we greatly prize our Christian liberties, yet we profess our utter dislike and abhorrence of a universal toleration, as being contrary to the mind of God in his Word.”

For men who were the champions of liberty thus to condemn its universal extension, was certainly inconsistent,—John Goodwin and others would have thought so; yet it will be found that what was thus declared is in harmony with the recorded opinions of other Inde-

* Sieyes reversed the numbers: the tribunate who discussed the laws were one hundred; the legislative body who decided on them, three hundred.

pendents of that day, and in equal harmony with the teaching of enlightened advocates of toleration in later times. Such persons overlooked the distinction between speculative opinions, and the overt acts which such opinions may have a tendency to produce. Recognising in Popery certain principles inconsistent with sound notions of civil liberty, and regarding the tenets of the Fifth Monarchy men, and others, as fraught with evils inconsistent with the order of society, the parties in question treated these men as if they were actually guilty of the crimes which were only anticipated as the probable results of their belief. Hence the refusal to tolerate them. Even Locke affirms,—“No opinions contrary to human society, or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society, are to be tolerated by the magistrate.” Referring to such persons as we have just named, he adds, “These, therefore, and the like, who attribute unto the faithful, religious, and orthodox, that is, in plain terms, unto themselves, any peculiar privilege and power above other mortals, in civil concernments, or who, upon pretence of religion, do challenge any matter of authority over such as are not associated with them” in their ecclesiastical communion,—“I say, these have no right to be tolerated by the magistrate; as neither those that will not own and teach the duty of tolerating all men in matters of mere religion.”* This passage is quoted from that immortal reasoner, not at all for the purpose of defending the above resolution, but simply to show that, in qualifying their doctrine of toleration, the Yarmouth Independents only

* Locke's Works, vol. ii. p. 261.

anticipated one of the greatest philosophers of the age.

Thirdly. They go on to say:—"We judge that the taking away of tithes for the maintenance of ministers, until as full a maintenance be equally secured, and as legally settled, tend very much to the destruction of the ministry and the preaching of the Gospel in these nations."

This resolution, in so far as it regards the acceptance of tithes, was only in accordance with the well-known practice of many Independents, as already illustrated. What exactly is meant by a provision as secure and legal does not appear, though, probably, there may be a reference to a more extended endowment of the ministry; for it is plain enough that the Congregationalists of that day had not learned to trust the Voluntary principle,—of the efficiency of which, however, recent times have afforded growing proofs.

Fourthly. They add:—"It is our desire that countenance be not given, or trust reposed, in the hand of Quakers; they being persons of such principles as are destructive to the Gospel, and inconsistent with the peace of civil societies."

This resolution does not go so far as to place the Quakers beyond the pale of toleration, but simply to refuse them "countenance" and "trust." Certainly it wears an uncharitable aspect, and would have been utterly inexcusable, had not some in that day, who called themselves Quakers, fallen into habits of excessive fanatical absurdity. Far different from the pacific and respectable members of that body, in later times, were James Naylor and other enthusiasts, who con-

nected themselves with the primitive Friends. Such persons certainly laid themselves open to the charge of being disturbers of the peace of civil societies; while their religious teaching, in many instances, was such as to be "destructive of the Gospel." Still, one regrets to find such a resolution on record.

But to conclude this chapter: the Independents had no longer any need to pass resolutions about tithes and State support. Clouds were gathering over the prospects of their Churches. The Yarmouth brethren were in evident trouble. Like the sea birds they had often watched on their own shores, giving signs that they saw a rising storm, did these worthies meet again and again, week after week, evidently in great trouble, to seek the Lord on behalf of the Church and nation. "23rd Feb. 1659.—This day was kept according to the former order; and the Church did order that Tuesday, the 28th, should be improved for the same end." These simple entries bring before us the picture of groups wrestling with God for their distracted country; and we see our fathers so employed, not in Yarmouth only, but in many a town, village, and city of the land. Though He whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the deep waters, did not answer their prayers as they desired, but left a large part of his Church and people to endure a long fight of affliction, yet we know that there were among them those who found a refuge from the coming storm beneath the shadow of His wings, and could say with David, "We will not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea." Much certainly did they need such Heaven-inspired faith and

fortitude; for soon their liberties were wrested from them by the grasp of reviving despotism. The persecutions of bygone days were revived; Charles II. walked in the footsteps of his father's intolerance; Bridge was once more silenced, and the place where his flock had assembled barred against them. "Nov. 19th, 1661.—This day," says our old authority, "the keys of the meeting-house were sent for to the bayliff's, and delivered to the Dean and Sir Thomas Meadows, and *the vestry door nayled up.*" Thus closes the first chapter in the history of the Mother Church of the East Anglian Independents.

CHAPTER X.

BLACK BARTHOLOMEW.

CROMWELL was gone: his son, unable to bear the heavy load which his father had sustained, was soon oppressed with the difficulties of his position, and abdicated the Protectorship. By treachery and intrigue the Restoration was accomplished: and after years of war and suffering for the sake of liberty, the people were seen prostrate at the feet of Charles the Second; asking no guarantees against the revival of despotism, but rather craving forgiveness for the victories they had won. The Royalist party, recovering from their depression, knew no bounds to their joy, as they welcomed another sovereign of the Stuart line. In a state of perfect delirium they celebrated his accession to his father's throne. Bonfires blazed in many a market-place and on many a hill,—the streets at night shone with illuminations,—windows were decorated with tapestry and garlands,—the May-poles were set up in the cross ways,—rumps of beef were roasted for the populace, and loaves of bread were thrown from the tops of market-houses. The bells rang till the steeples rocked, and crowds shouted till the very earth shook. The Royalist, on his knees, drank to the health of his Prince; and the swagger-

ing Cavalier once more boldly sang his favourite lay, "The King shall enjoy his own again."

"No Bishop, no King," was the motto of James; and his grandson, so far adopting the sentiment as to regard Episcopacy as a bulwark to the throne, early restored the prelates to their office and rank. Mr. Pepys, in his curious and inquisitive rambles, went down to Westminster on the 4th October, 1660, to see how the rochet and lawn looked after long disuse, and on his return home wrote down in his Journal, "Saw the Bishops all in their habits in Henry the Seventh's Chapel; but, at their going out, how people did most of them look upon them as strange creatures, and few with any kind of love or respect."

The altered state of things foreboded evil enough to all classes of Nonconformists; and however some might be buoyed up with hopes of "liberty to tender consciences," the worst fears of others were completely realized. The Presbyterians had been active in the restoration of the King. They had attended him with acclamations through the city towards Westminster; and good old Mr. Arthur Jackson had presented the gay monarch with a richly-bound Bible, which Charles promised should be the rule of his actions. They had also received the royal assurance that respect should be paid to their conscientious scruples; and they soothed themselves with the hope of retaining their benefices by some compromise with their adversaries. They sought a revision of the Liturgy, and some other alterations in ecclesiastical matters; in consequence of which a conference on the subject was appointed by the King to take place at the Savoy Palace, between

twenty-one Anglican divines and as many of the Presbyterian order.* "It broke up," says Burnet, "without doing any good. It did rather hurt, and heightened the sharpness that was then on people's minds to such a degree that it needed no addition to raise it higher. The Presbyterians laid their complaints before the King. But little regard was had to them; and now all the concern that seemed to employ the Bishops' thoughts was, not only to make no alteration on their own account, but to make the terms of conformity much stricter than they had been before the war."†

Before the Savoy Conference terminated, the two Houses of Convocation assembled. The ruling party, having resolved to disregard the conscientious scruples of their brethren, proceeded to take measures for the full enforcement of their own ecclesiastical system. They decided that Episcopal ordination was indispensably necessary, and that all who would not submit to that right should be compelled to relinquish their benefices. They revised the Book of Common Prayer, and introduced a number of alterations, some of which seemed to be intended only for the purpose of exasperating the Puritans. It was known that they objected to saints' days,—the Bishops increased the number. It was known that they disliked the Apocryphal lessons,—the Bishops therefore added another, containing the story of Bel and the Dragon. Parliament at length confirmed the work of the Convocation, and passed the memorable Act of Uniformity.

* The Conference commenced March 25th, 1661.

† Burnet's History of his Own Times, vol. i. p. 182.

This law enjoined on all clergymen to profess their unfeigned assent and consent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer; to repudiate the Solemn League and Covenant, and acknowledge that the oath taken to maintain it involved no moral obligation; and further, to declare that it was unlawful under any pretence whatever to take up arms against the King.

The feast of St. Bartholomew, August 24th, 1662, was the day fixed for the execution of the Act. In anticipating the day, there were some who were mainly anxious about retaining their livings, and were little scrupulous respecting their submission to the conditions imposed. Their consciences had been so exercised already in the matter of conformity, that they had become amazingly supple. Some of these compliant personages had been Prelatists under Charles, Presbyterians under the Parliament, Independents under Cromwell, and were therefore now prepared to take another bend in their ecclesiastical course, and become once more zealous Episcopalians, and advocates for the Book of Common Prayer. But others, who had not attained to such marvellous flexibility of mind, took into their grave consideration the newly-enacted terms of conformity. Some men, who had a conscience, did not think that oaths could be so lightly abjured, and their moral obligation so easily annulled, as this new law took for granted; and though quite prepared to swear allegiance to the Crown, they could not go so far as to subscribe to the doctrine of unqualified passive obedience. But subscription to the revised Book of Common Prayer constituted with

many the chief difficulty. As to the exact contents of it, some of the ministers could not be informed previously to the time of their being required to give to it their unfeigned assent and consent; inasmuch as it was not issued from the press till a very short time before the 24th of August, and men living in remote parts of the country could not obtain the volume by that day. But, of course, the ministers were acquainted with its contents in general. Baptismal regeneration, the practice of having godfathers and godmothers, using the sign of the cross, kneeling at the Lord's Supper, the belief of a threefold order in the ministry, the burial-service, confirmation, and the reading of the Apocrypha in churches, were all still sanctioned in the Prayer-Book; and these points, which had from the beginning been opposed by the Puritans, remained as strongly objectionable as ever. Exceptions were also taken against several of the canons. Thus far almost all who belonged to the Puritan class were agreed, but the strict Presbyterians and Independents obviously had additional and yet graver objections to the new Establishment.

The parsonages in many parts of England, as the corn was ripening in the summer of 1662, must have been the scenes of some memorable struggles between conscience and care, faith and feeling. Good men were reduced to a sad dilemma. The alternative was not the parish-church or the conventicle, tithe or voluntary contribution, but preaching as a Conformist or silence—a legalized income or beggary. To render the hardship the more severe, the terms of conformity were imposed before Michaelmas, when the payment of the

year's tithes would be due, and therefore the ejected ministers would lose a twelvemonth's income. They were men—they were husbands—they were fathers; they had their quiet studies, and they saw their families in comfort—their wives sitting in the snug parlour of the rectory—their children sporting in the garden or over the glebe. To leave these tranquil homes, to exchange them for abject poverty,—here was a trial of faith, more easily talked of than thoroughly realized. It were ridiculous to look on these individuals as obstinate fanatics,—they had heads and hearts, and both were at work in this trying season. They thought deeply on the matter, weighed it carefully, looked at it on all sides, prayed over it, conversed about it. Perhaps the reader sees one of them in his study revolving the whole subject, examining the Prayer-Book, pondering its objectionable sentences, and writing down his reasons for dissent. Perchance a wife and a mother, who is honouring this volume by her perusal, may with all the vividness of a woman's imagination picture to herself the country rector, and the beloved companion of his cares, sitting at eventide by the window, round which the honeysuckle and the rose are entwining their buds and shedding their fragrance, first looking at the garden which *she* has cultivated with her own hands, and the church peeping above the trees where *he* has laboured for many a year, and then gazing on each other with tears as they discuss the point, "We must conform, or leave all this next August." Nor did the ministers neglect to correspond with one another on the question: the sluggish post was anxiously waited for by many a worthy, as he expected from

some clerical brother a folio sheet of closely-written answers to a similar amount of matter in the form of query and objection. After mature deliberation the Nonconformist adopted his resolve, sometimes with a solemnity which rendered all subsequent hesitation impossible. A copy of a written resolution by Mr. Samuel Birch, of Bampton, Oxfordshire, addressed in the most solemn manner to the Deity, is preserved by Calamy. "I am at thy footstool," says this confessor; "I may not do evil that good may come,—I may not do this great sin against my God and the dictates of my conscience. I therefore surrender myself, my soul, my ministry, my people, my place, my wife and children, and whatsoever else is herein concerned, into thy hand from whom I received them. Lord, have mercy upon me, and assist me for ever to keep faith and a good conscience." One good man braced himself up for the crisis, by preaching to his people for several successive Sabbaths from the words of Paul to the suffering Hebrews: "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Another, who had a wife and ten children, fortified himself by reflecting on that consolatory passage in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, where He bids his followers take no thought for the morrow, and chides their distrust in Providence by an appeal to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field; and when this excellent individual was asked how he would maintain his large family, he replied, "They must live on the sixth chapter of Matthew." *

* Nonconf. Memorial, vol. ii. p. 312.

At length the feast of St. Bartholomew arrived. It was with an aching heart that many a one rose that morning. With what deep feeling must the pastor have prayed in his closet—the father in his family! That day dawned on them in plenty; it would close on them in pauperism. We are told of the immense congregations that assembled to hear the farewell discourses, and of the numbers who were melted into tears. The ejected ministers had to preach funeral sermons over their own ministry. Their official character now ceased. Henceforth their lips in public must be sealed, as with the touch of death. This gave unwonted force and pathos to their ministrations, and no one can wonder that the listening multitudes were melted into tears. Some of the sermons are preserved, and they are remarkable for the singleness of purpose which they display.* The preacher evidently aims *alone* at the edification of his people on this last opportunity of addressing them. There is a striking absence in their discourses of everything like party feeling, of invectives against their enemies, of attempts to excite pity for themselves. Their personal allusions are few, simple, manly, and dignified. “I know,” said the eminent Dr. Bates in his farewell sermon,—“I know you expect I should say something as to my Nonconformity: I shall only say thus much,—it is neither fancy, faction, nor humour that makes me not to comply, but merely for fear of offending God. And if after the best means used for my illumination, as prayer to God, discourse, or study, I am not able to be satisfied con-

* These sermons were preached the Sunday before St. Bartholomew's day.

cerning the lawfulness of what is required,—if it be my unhappiness to be in error, surely men will have no reason to be angry with me in this world, and I hope God will pardon me in the next.”

“Brethren,” exclaims Mr. Lye, “I could do very much for the love I bear to you, but I dare not sin. I know they will tell you this is pride and peevishness in us, that we are tender of our reputation, and would fain all be Bishops, and forty things more; but the Lord be witness between them and us in this. Beloved, I prefer my wife and children before a blast of air or people’s talk. I am very sensible of what it is to be reduced to a morsel of bread. Let the God of heaven and earth do what He will with me, if I could have subscribed with a good conscience I would: I would do anything to keep myself in the work of God; but to sin against God, I dare not do it.” In meeting the charge of disaffection to the Government, Mr. Atkin observes, “Let him never be accounted a sound Christian that doth not fear God and honour the King. I beg that you will not interpret our Nonconformity to be an act of unpeaceableness and disloyalty. We will do anything for his Majesty but sin. We will hazard anything for him but our souls. We hope we could die for him, only we dare not be damned for him. We make no question, however we may be accounted of here, we shall be found loyal and obedient subjects at our appearance before God’s tribunal.”*

Men who could thus talk and act, must have felt, as the feast of Bartholomew closed upon them, a conscious integrity, and a self-respect which compensated

* See “Sermons by Ejected Ministers.”

for their temporal losses. Some ministers, who had conformed, once met Mr. Christopher Jackson, of Crossby on the Hill, in Westmoreland, an ejected brother, and taunted him with his threadbare coat. "If it be bare," he rejoined, "it has *never been turned*." And truly a man whose soul is clothed with an untorn conscience, though his attire be that of a beggar, may walk through the world with a more portly bearing and princely step than he whose ragged conscience is covered with the costliest robes! Some of the parishioners of these ministers wondered at their scruples. "Ah! Mr. Heywood," said a countryman, addressing the Vicar of Ormskirk, "we would gladly have you preach still in the church." "Yes," said he, "I would as gladly preach as you can desire it, if I could do it with a safe conscience." "Oh, Sir," replied the man, "many now-a-days make a *great gash* in their consciences: cannot you make a *little nick* in yours?" And some of the very individuals who were in the first instance the loudest in condemning conformity, and in leading their brethren to the edge of the Rubicon, and persuading them to make the decisive plunge, when it came to the point to do the thing themselves, shrank back from the danger, and blamed the men whom they had before cheered on. "Never conform! never conform!" said the Rector of Burnham to Mr. Clopton, who had the living of Reckondon, "Never conform, Sir!"—but when St. Bartholomew's day came, this zealous adviser could not find it in his heart to sacrifice his tithes and his glebe. He then wrote to Mr. Clopton, and told him to remember that Reckondon was a good living; but the minister, who had been at first

less excited about the matter than his neighbour, wrote back word that "he hoped he should keep a good conscience." The men who, with integrity and uprightness, sacrificed their livings, secured for themselves a much better inheritance than the men who, on the principles of expediency, conformed and retained their benefices.

Men who could act with such principle, must also have endeared themselves more than ever to their pious parishioners. The moral heroism they displayed on St. Bartholomew's day, must have appeared more impressive than any of their sermons. Sublimity now seemed blended with their gentler pastoral qualities. With more than usual reverence, and with not less affection, must the groups have gathered round them as they left the church that afternoon, to return for the last time to the parsonage.

"The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran :
Even children follow'd with endearing wile,
And pluck'd his gown to share the good man's smile :
His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest,
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distrest;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,—
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven :
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm;
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

The 24th of August, perhaps, was the most trying day to the ejected ministers, for then as men of God they surrendered their spiritual charge; but the day when they left their homes, endeared by the domestic associations of past happy years, could not fail to affect

them deeply, for then came their trial as husbands and fathers. No artist that I know of has painted the Nonconformist and his family leaving the parsonage, though it would form an interesting subject for his pencil; nor has any poet selected it as the theme for his muse: but the well-known lines in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* may be accommodated to the incident, and will bring before us the picture with touching beauty.

“ Good Heaven ! what sorrows gloom'd that parting day,
That call'd them from their native walks away,
When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly look'd their last.
With loudest plaints the mother spoke her woes,
And blest the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kiss'd her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
And clasp'd them close, in sorrow doubly dear;
While her fond husband strove to lend relief,
In all the silent manliness of grief.”

Upon the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII., and upon the deprivation of the Popish priests under Elizabeth, some provision was made for their necessities; and when any one of the Episcopal clergy, during the Commonwealth, was dismissed from his living, a fifth of his former income was reserved for his use: but no consideration of this kind was shown to the ministers who were ejected by the Act of Uniformity. Numbers of them were therefore reduced to perfect poverty. Some interesting facts have been preserved relative to their sufferings, and the remarkable interpositions of Providence in their behalf: but what a multitude of such facts, in the history of two thousand families or more, must have passed into oblivion!

“Not long after the year 1662, Mr. Grove, a gentleman of great opulence, whose seat was near Bird-bush, upon his wife’s lying dangerously ill, sent to his parish minister to pray with her. When the messenger came, he was just gone out with the hounds, and sent word he would come when the hunt was over. Mr. Grove expressing much resentment against the minister for choosing rather to follow his diversions than attend one of his flock in such circumstances, one of the servants took the liberty to say, ‘Sir, our shepherd, if you will send for him, can pray very well: we have often heard him at prayer in the field.’ Upon this he was immediately sent for; and Mr. Grove asking him whether he ever did or could pray, the shepherd fixed his eyes upon him, and with peculiar seriousness in his countenance, replied, ‘God forbid, Sir, I should live one day without prayer.’ He was then desired to pray with the sick lady; which he did so pertinently to her case, with such fluency and fervour of devotion, as greatly to astonish the husband and all the family who were present. When they arose from their knees, the gentleman addressed him to this effect: ‘Your language and manner discover you to be a very different person from what your appearance indicates. I conjure you to inform me who and what you are, and what were your views and situation in life before you came into my service.’ Upon which he told him he was one of the ministers who had been lately ejected from the Church; and that having nothing of his own left, he was content for a livelihood to submit to the honest and peaceful employment of tending sheep. On hearing this, Mr. Grove said, ‘Then you shall be my

shepherd,' and immediately erected a meeting-house on his own estate, in which Mr. Ince (for that was the shepherd's name) preached and gathered a congregation of Dissenters." *

After the ejection of Mr. Perkins, Vicar of Burley in Rutlandshire, he often travelled on the Lord's day several miles from home to preach, and got ten shillings for his day's service, which for a great while was the most that he had to support his family. He was often in straits. At one time a niece of his, whom he had brought up, going after her marriage to visit him, in the course of free conversation with her, he said, "Child, how much do you think I have to keep my family?—but a poor threepence." After which, she appearing affected, he with a great deal of cheerfulness cried out, "Fear not; God will provide;" and in a little time a gentleman's servant knocked at the door, who brought him a side of venison for a present, together with some wheat and malt.

Mr. Maurice, Rector of Shelton in Shropshire, was sometimes reduced to great straits, whilst he lived at Shrewsbury after his ejection. Once, when he had been very thoughtful, and was engaged in prayer with his family, suiting some petitions to their necessitous case, a carrier knocked at the door, inquired for him, and delivered to him a handful of money untold, as a present from some friends, but would not tell who they were.†

These are but specimens of the legendary tales handed down respecting the Bartholomew confessors.

* Palmer's Nonconformist Memorial, vol. iii. p. 363.

† See Ibid. vol. iii. pp. 133, 160.

Some, indeed, may look on them as fictions; but those who thoroughly believe the assurance of the Divine Redeemer, that if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all needful things shall be added unto us, will readily allow the probability, the verisimilitude of such statements; nor can any fair suspicion be entertained respecting the veracity, the means of information, the good sense, and habits of careful inquiry possessed by the men who have related these incidents. If we believe (and who that reads the New Testament can disbelieve it?) that a special providence watches over those who strive to do God's will, and rest upon his promises, we shall be prepared to admit remarkable interpositions on behalf of men who signalized themselves by their religious integrity? Instead of there being an antecedent improbability against such facts, they are the very facts which Divine revelation stamps with a striking likelihood.

The pecuniary difficulties, however, in which the Act of Uniformity involved so many devoted men, were only the beginning of sorrows: their reputation, their personal liberty, and their lives were soon in jeopardy. For these silenced ministers to preach to their late parishioners and friends, for them even to pray with a few devout spirits like themselves, was deemed a crime. Their words were often caught up, and with diabolical ingenuity construed into treason. If some quaint preacher spoke of the devil as a king who courts the soul, and speaks fair till he has obtained his throne, the metaphorical language was grossly perverted, and there were informers ready to declare that the good man said the King was like the

Evil One.* Treason, heresy, schism, were unscrupulously charged upon this proscribed class, and the malicious were never at a loss for pretexts to compass their purposes. Ruffians were ready to execute the bidding of inhuman magistrates and informers, and would rush into the houses of ejected ministers while they were praying with their families, and, levelling a pistol at the back of the suppliant, command him in the King's name to rise and surrender himself.† Dragged before prejudiced justices of the peace, to answer charges equally vague and false, these Puritans were treated with a brutality which in the present day appears incredible. When, for example, one of these confessors was pleading his own cause, an alderman rose from the bench, tore off the satin cap worn by the accused, and boxed his ears.‡ The ejected ministers were sometimes conducted through the streets by constables after the manner of criminals, and compelled to walk long distances to prison, till their feet were pierced through their worn-out shoes, and stained with blood.§ A memorable story is told of one of these worthies, illustrative of the inhumanity of his persecutors and of his own beautiful Christian spirit. Thomas Worts was Curate of Burningham in Norfolk. Being apprehended after his ejectment by a writ *De excommunicato capiendo*, he was brought from Burningham

* Palmer's Nonconformist Memorial, vol. iii. p. 163. The fact which is here related occurred before the Act of Uniformity; but it shows the animus by which the persecutors of the Puritans were ever influenced.

† Palmer, vol. ii. p. 158.

‡ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 207.

§ The attempt to impose silence on these men by confining them in gaols often proved in vain; for many instances are recorded of their preaching through the gratings of their prison windows.

to Norwich Castle with his legs chained under the horse's belly. Entering that old wall-girt city through St. Augustine's Gate, which with its square tower guarded one of the northern entrances, he was watched by a woman looking from a chamber window, who exclaimed in derision, as he passed close by her, "Worts, where's now your God?" "Turn," said the injured man, "to Micah vii. 10: 'Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? Mine eye shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.'" It is added, that the woman, touched by this allusion, ceased from her enmity, and became a kind friend to the man whom she had insulted.* Worts had a brother named Richard, who in like manner was apprehended, and was imprisoned for seven years. Part of this time was spent in Norwich Castle, in a miserable cell containing six prisoners beside himself, with wickets looking into the felons' yard, which were constantly kept open, or the inmates would have been stifled with the fumes of the charcoal burnt in that cold damp place. "If his wife came to see one of the captives, he was called down to the door; and the keeper used to set his back against one side of the doorway, and his foot against the other, so as to prevent her entrance any farther."† The plague was raging at the time; the filth and stench of the prison were alone enough to create a pestilence. The close confinement of the

* Palmer, vol. iii. p. 2. A similar story is related of Mr. Norman, of Bridgewater.

† Ibid. vol. iii. p. 4.

prisoners seriously affected their health; one was in imminent danger; and under these circumstances application was made for at least a temporary release—but in vain.

In the year following that in which the Act of Uniformity was passed, another statute was made for the oppression of the Nonconformists. Under pretence of preventing riotous assemblies, such as had recently troubled the peace of Yorkshire and Westmoreland, in which a few of the Fifth Monarchy men were implicated, it was enacted that if more than five persons, besides the members of a family, met together for religious exercises, anywhere but in the churches of the Establishment, the offenders should in the first instance be fined five pounds, or be imprisoned three months; in the second, pay ten pounds or suffer imprisonment for six months; and in the third, forfeit a hundred pounds or be sent over the seas for seven years.

The Act did not remain a dead letter in the statute-book. In many places it was carried out with extreme rigour. The Nonconformists were carefully watched: spies were set to discover where they worshipped, and inform the local authorities. Men calling themselves officers of justice were prompt in endeavouring to arrest the parties, and inflict the penalty. The records of the Church at Broadmead, Bristol, contain several notices of the operation of the Act. As the people met at one Mr. Yeats's house, a baker, in Maryport-street, the house was beset by the mayor and several aldermen, who demanded entrance; but the door being kept close, they forced it open with iron bars: some of

the worshippers escaped at the back of the premises; others were seized and sent to prison. "We were hunted by the Nimrods," observe these humble confessors, "and assaulted many a time by men, but saved by God." One day, on a week meeting, a guard of musketeers was sent to take them into custody; but, getting down into a cellar, they eluded their enemies' search. "Another time, at brother Ellis's, on a Lord's day, the mayor and aldermen, with officers, beset the house, and at last broke open the back door, and so came in; but in the meantime our brother having contrived, by a great cupboard, to hide a garret door, he sent up most of the men out of the meeting into the said garret; and so we were concealed." The Non-conformists in country villages sometimes avoided detection by assembling in some manorial hall belonging to one of the richer brethren; and there, at the midnight hour, the ejected pastor gathered round him some of his scattered flock, and refreshed their hearts by the sound of his familiar voice, but infinitely more by the truths he uttered. Thus, in the great hall at Hudscott, belonging to the family of the Rolles, near South Moulton, in Devonshire, did John Flavel address a crowded auditory. Supported by the hospitality, and screened by the influence, of the owner of the mansion, he there resided for some time; and amidst the plantations, gardens, and rural scenes which environed the spot, gathered the materials of his "Husbandry Spiritualized;" so that it is highly probable he furnished in his midnight exercises many of those ingenious illustrations, so suited to the tastes and habits of his rustic flock, which are found in the

popular work just mentioned. The recesses of the dark wood offered a still more secure, and in some seasons even a more grateful sanctuary; and beneath the shades of lofty pines, or overhanging elms, or round the gnarled trunks of oaks that had stood for ages, forming temples of God's own building,—the persecuted brotherhood assembled to hear the Word of God; and there, too, at times, without fear, and freely as the birds on the branches, would they lift up their voices to heaven, and chaunt the high praises of their Creator. So did a group of Christians at Andover meet in a sequestered dell, amidst a wide-spreading wood, four miles from the town, while the clear shining stars, or the pale moon, guided them to their retreat. The same little company afterwards assembled in a private dwelling-house, selecting the night as the season for worship. "It was when the eye of human observation was closed by sleep, that they ventured to the room; and having entered it, made fast the door and closed the window-shutter, and even extinguished the light of the candle, lest its glimmering might be discovered through a crevice, by some stray enemy from without. Here they often continued all night in prayer to God, until the ray of morning light, struggling down the chimney, announced the time to disperse. Thus they learnt that the darkness hideth not from God, but the night shineth as the day; and that the Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward us openly." *

But the cleverest precautions sometimes failed. In

* Pearsall's Outlines of Congregationalism, with a Sketch of its Rise in Andover, p. 94.

many cases they were altogether neglected; and the worshippers exposed themselves to detection, from a consciousness that they were only obeying the laws of God, however their conduct might be regarded by the laws of men. It touched the heart of Mr. Pepys, High Churchman as he was, to see these unoffending persons led through the streets as culprits. He writes in his Journal, under date 1664, "I saw several poor creatures carried by constables, for being at a conventicle. They go like lambs, without any resistance; and would to God they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be caught."

Such were the consequences of the Restoration of Charles II. "*Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum*," said a zealous Presbyterian Royalist, when conversing with a friend upon the question of bringing in his Majesty. "*Ruit cœlum*," remarked this friend, on meeting him one day after the Act of Uniformity was passed.*

* Palmer, vol. ii. p. 432.

CHAPTER XL

THE PLAGUE YEAR.

“ And though it is true that a great many of the clergy did shut up their churches, and fled, as other people did, for the safety of their lives, yet all did not do so: some ventured to officiate. . . . And Dissenters did the like also, even in the very churches where the parish ministers were either dead or fled; nor was there any room for making any difference at such a time as this was.”

DEFOR.

THE year 1665 was an awful period in the annals of London. During the two previous years the plague had raged in Holland, and reports of that dire calamity had formed the staple of many a conversation by the firesides of England. People had heard from their parents of a similar visitation in their own country, in the days of King James. Cases of plague, too, it was believed, had frequently occurred at home since then; and therefore the tidings of the Continental pestilence might well fill them with alarm. Two men sickened in Drury-lane, December 1664. On inquiry, headache, fever, a burning sensation in the stomach, dimness of sight, and, above all, the livid spots upon the chest, indicated beyond all dispute that the plague had reached London. The affecting intelligence soon

spread. The weekly bills of mortality for the next four months exhibited an increase of deaths. The fears of the public rose to a higher pitch. The month of May showed that the dreaded disease was continuing and extending its ravages; and in the last week of June, 276 persons fell victims to the destroyer. The plague had indeed come, and was spreading its wings over the great city. Men fled in terror; coaches and other vehicles were seen hastening along the highways, filled with those whose means enabled them to change their residence. But multitudes remained, especially persons of the poorer class, who, crowded together in narrow streets and alleys, seemed marked out by the Angel of Death as his certain prey: among them his ravages were most awful; they chiefly swelled the amount of deaths reported from week to week, rising from hundreds to thousands, till, during the month of September, the terrific number of 10,000, at least, was the weekly average of the bills of mortality. In one night, it is said, 4,000 died,—a night long to be remembered. One shop after another, one dwelling after another, was closed. The long red cross, with the words, “Lord, have mercy upon us,” inscribed on the door, indicated that within Death was doing his work. The watchmen appointed by the magistrates stood at the entrance, armed with halberts, to prevent all communication between the inmates and other persons; and thus to limit, as far as possible, the spread of contagion. Instead of the busy crowds that once lined the thoroughfares, a few persons might be seen walking cautiously along in the middle of the path, fearful of each other’s touch. “The highways were forsaken,

and the travellers walked in byeways." A coach was rarely met, save when, with curtains closely drawn, it conveyed some plague-stricken mortal to the pest-house. The wain, laden with timber and other materials, had disappeared; for men had no heart to build; and the half-finished structure was left in premature ruin. The cart bearing provision came not within the city gate; the market was held in the outskirts, where the seller feared to touch the money of the buyer, till it had been dropped into a vessel of vinegar. In many of the streets the grass sprung up, and a fearful silence brooded everywhere, in harmony with the wide-spread desolation. The London cries, the sounds of music, the murmur of cheerful groups, the din of business, had ceased. That deep solitude, in a great city, must have been overwhelming. And how must the lonely passenger, as he walked along, have shuddered, while now and then this portentous silence was broken, as there issued from an open window the shrieks of some miserable being in the agony of disease or bereavement! In some cases no human sounds, even of terror, broke the awful tranquillity of the scene. Whole streets were desolate—the doors left open—the windows shattering with the wind—the houses empty—the inmates gone.

Suddenly did the disease smite the patient. Sometimes they suddenly dropped in the streets; others, perhaps, had time to go to the next stall or porch, "and just sit down and die." The man who drove the death-cart expired on his way to the huge pit dug for the reception of thousands, or fell down dead upon the heap of corpses that he was tumbling into that

rude place of burial. A person went home, hale and strong; "at eventide there was trouble, and before the morning he was not." As the mother nursed the babe, the purple spot appeared on her breast; and in a short time the helpless little one would be clinging to its lifeless parent—to follow her, in a few brief moments, to another world. Every man who was affected with sickness naturally thought his hour was come; and who but must be deeply affected with the following passage in Pepys' Diary? "June 17.—It struck me very deep this afternoon, going with a hackney-coach down Holborn, from the Lord Treasurer's, the coachman I found *to drive easily and easily, and at last stood still*, and came down, hardly able to stand, and told me he was suddenly struck very sick, and almost blind, he could not see; so I light, and went into another coach, with a sad heart for the poor man, and for myself also, lest he should have been struck with the plague."

In some cases the disease lurked for several days in the system without discovering itself, yet all the while proving contagious; "and it was very sad to reflect how such a person had been a walking destroyer, perhaps for a week or fortnight,—how he had ruined those whom he would have hazarded his life to save, and had been breathing death upon them, even, perhaps, in his tender kissings and embracings of his own children." When the disease reached its crisis, it was often attended with delirium in the most appalling forms, and the pitiable sufferers would start from their beds—rave on the passer-by whom they saw from the opened casement,—perhaps rush down stairs—burst into the street, screaming in the most terrific manner,—then

haste to the river, and there terminate their earthly agonies by suicide. Awful as were the real horrors of the plague year, they were augmented by excited imagination. Men saw in the heavens portentous forms, blazing stars, and angels with flaming swords; and on the earth they discerned spectres in significant and menacing attitudes. Some fancied themselves inspired: one of these persons made the silent streets ring with the deep cry, "Yet forty days, and London shall be destroyed." And another, with nothing but a girdle round his loins, and bearing a vessel of burning coals upon his head, paced the city by night and by day, exclaiming, "Oh the great and dreadful God!" There were individuals, even as amidst the plague of Athens, "who spent their days in merriment and folly—who feared neither the displeasure of God nor the laws of men;—not the former, because they deemed it the same thing whether they worshipped or neglected to do so, seeing that all in common perished;—not the latter, because no one expected his life would last till he received the punishment of his crimes."* But the greater number of the population looked on the calamity in the light of a judgment from God, trembled at his displeasure, and sought his mercy. Multitudes were ready to welcome religious instruction by whomsoever conveyed. Those whose health continued thronged to hear the preaching of the Gospel; and such as were smitten by disease, but capable of holding conversation, were glad of the visits of the Christian minister. There was a wide field opened for the exercise of diligence and zeal. Some of the conforming Clergy availed themselves of the oppor-

* Thucydides, ii. 54.

tunity to attend to the spiritual wants of their dying flocks, but others of a different temper fled from the scene of suffering. When one of the pastors fell sick, it was no easy thing to supply his lack of service.

"Mr. Partington," says Dr. Bing, writing to a friend, "lies at the point of death, whose turn being to officiate this week I supply; for none else would do it, except they were paid for it. Little mercy, the Lord be merciful to us! I wish it were as formerly, which was not so in such cases of necessity." From the same writer, it appears that the Bishop of London found it necessary to threaten the refugees with expulsion from their livings, if they did not resume their posts. "It is said my Lord Bishop of London hath sent to those pastors that have quitted their flocks by reason of these times, that if they return not speedily others will be put into their places."*

The vacant churches—the neglected parishes—the dying souls—the awakened multitudes, presented opportunities of usefulness to some of the ejected Puritans, of which they were not slow to avail themselves. Their labours during the plague year were worthy of their heroism, and deserve to be held in honourable remembrance. To a brief record of them the present chapter is devoted.

The most remarkable of these philanthropists—at least the person of whose exertions we have the fullest account—was Mr. Thomas Vincent. He had been a student at Christ Church, when Dr. Owen was Dean, and on leaving the University he became Chaplain to the Earl of Leicester. He succeeded Mr. Case in the

* *Ellis's Letters*, vol. iv.

living of St. Mary Magdalen, Milk-street, from which he was ejected by the Act of Uniformity. In his retirement, he devoted himself most earnestly to the study of the Scriptures, and committed to memory the Book of Psalms, together with the whole of the New Testament; observing to his friends, "that he did not know but they who had taken from him his pulpit, might, in time, demand his Bible also." When the plague broke out, he was residing at Islington, as an assistant in the academy of Mr. Doolittle,—a situation for which his attainments eminently qualified him. The pestilence, for some time, did not penetrate into this retired village; and therefore Mr. Vincent, while residing there, was comparatively safe from infection. But sympathy with the sufferers in the great city proved a stronger feeling in this good man's bosom than a regard for his own safety; and he acquainted Mr. Doolittle with his design to quit his academic employment, and devote himself to the visitation of the sick. The latter endeavoured to dissuade him, by representing the hazard he would run; told him he thought he had no call to it, as he was otherwise employed; and urged that it was advisable he should reserve himself for further service to the young in that station in which Providence had placed him. But Mr. Vincent not being convinced by the arguments of his friend, it was determined to seek the advice of certain ministerial brethren. On meeting them, Mr. Vincent observed, that he had very seriously considered the matter before he had come to a resolution; that he had carefully examined the state of his own soul, and could look death in the face with comfort. He thought it was absolutely necessary that

such vast numbers of dying people should have some spiritual assistance. "He said he could have no prospect of service in the exercise of his ministry, through his whole life, like that which now offered itself. He had often committed the case and himself to God in prayer, and, upon the whole, had solemnly devoted himself to God and souls, upon this occasion; and therefore hoped none of them would endeavour to weaken his hands in this work." The ministers listened with satisfaction to these noble sentiments, unanimously concurred in approving his resolution, and then earnestly committed him to God's care and blessing. This memorable city missionary devoted himself to his work with zeal, and pursued it with patience. Every day he went from house to house, visiting the sick; every Sabbath he preached in some parish-church.

His book, entitled "God's Terrible Voice in the City," presents some most graphic accounts of the effects of the pestilence. "We could hardly go forth," he observes, "without meeting many coffins, and seeing deceased persons limping in the streets. Amongst other sad spectacles, methought two were very affecting. One of a woman coming alone, and weeping by the door where I lived (which was in the midst of the infection), with a little coffin under her arm, carrying it to the new churchyard. I did judge that it was the *mother of the child*, and that all the family besides was dead, and she was forced to coffin up and to bury with her own hands this her last dead child. Another was of a man at the corner of Artillery-wall, that, as I judge through the dizziness of his head with the dis-

ease, which seized upon him there, had dashed his face against the wall; and when I came by, he lay hanging with his bloody face over the rails, and bleeding upon the ground; and as I came back, he was removed under a tree in Moorfields, and lay upon his back. I went and spake to him; he could make no answer, but rattled in the throat, and, as I was informed, within half an hour died in the place." The miseries which this man of God witnessed during the plague year he details at considerable length, but says little respecting his own labours, which are known to have been "more abundant." In the following passage relating to the pestilence in his own family, the incidental allusion to his daily visits brings the good man vividly before us in his walks of mercy:—"At last we were visited,—the cup was put into our hand to drink. And first our maid was smitten. I had been abroad to see a friend in the city, whose husband was newly dead of the plague—and she herself visited with it. I came back to see another, whose wife was dead of the plague, and he himself under apprehensions that he should die within a few hours. I came home, and the maid was on her death-bed. What was an interest in Christ worth then! What a privilege to have a title to the kingdom of heaven!" Seven persons in the house died, and their expressions in their last moments proved how strongly they were supported by the consolations of Christianity. Mr. Vincent states as remarkable, that it was generally observed how peacefully God's people died during that awful season,—"that they died with such comfort as Christians do not ordinarily arrive unto, except when they are called forth to

suffer martyrdom for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Some," he adds, "who have been full of doubts, and fears, and complaints, whilst they have lived and been well, have been filled with assurance, and comfort, and praise, and joyful expectations of glory, when they have laid on their death-beds by this disease. And not only more grown Christians who have been more ripe for glory have had these comforts, but also some younger Christians, whose acquaintance with the Lord hath been of no long standing."

He says but little of his own pulpit efforts, though they were so extraordinary, that it was a general inquiry every week where he would preach on the following Sunday,—and though, among the multitudes who crowded the churches to hear him, many persons were awakened by every sermon. But he describes, generally, the motives which influenced the Puritan preachers to occupy the pulpits vacated by their endowed brethren, and the powerful excitement which their preaching produced. It is quite certain that what he states of others in these respects was true of himself. "Perceiving the churches to be open, and pulpits to be open, and finding pamphlets flung about the streets of 'Pulpits to be let,' they judged that the law of God and nature did now dispense with, yea, command their preaching in public places, though the law of man (it is to be supposed in ordinary cases) did forbid them to do. Surely," argues this silenced Non-conformist,—“ Surely, if there had been a law that none should practise physic in the city but such as were licensed by the College of Physicians, and most of those, when there was the greatest need of them,

should in the time of the plague have retired into the country, and other physicians who had as good skill in physic, and no licence, should have stayed among the sick, none would have judged it to have been breach of law, in such an extraordinary case, to endeavour by their practice, though without a licence, to save the lives of those who by good care and physic were capable of a cure; and they could hardly have freed themselves from the guilt of murder of many bodies, if for a nicety of law in such a case of necessity they should have neglected to administer physic:—the case was the same with the unlicensed ministers, which stayed when so many of the licensed ones were gone: and as the need of souls was greater than the need of bodies, the sickness of the one being more universal and dangerous than the sickness of the other,—and the saving or losing of the soul being so many degrees beyond the preservation or death of the body; so the obligation upon ministers was stronger, and the motive to preach greater; and for them to have incurred the guilt of soul-murder, by their neglect to administer soul-physic, would have been more heinous and unanswerable. That they were called by the Lord into public, I suppose that few of any seriousness will deny, when the Lord did so eminently own them in giving many seals of their ministry unto them.

“Now they are preaching, and every sermon was unto them as if they were preaching their last. Old Time seems now to stand at the head of the pulpit, with its great scythe, saying, with a hoarse voice, ‘Work while it is called to-day; at night I will mow thee down.’ Grim Death seems to stand at the side of

the pulpit, with its sharp arrow, saying, 'Do thou shoot God's arrows, and I will shoot mine.' The Grave seems to lie open at the foot of the pulpit, with dust in her bosom, saying,—

'Louden thy cry
To God,
To men,
And now fulfil thy trust:
Here thou must lye;
Mouth stopt,
Brenth gone,
And silent in the dust.' "

Large churches were crowded to suffocation, as Vincent and his brethren preached the Gospel, under the influence of these exciting thoughts. The imagination readily restores the time-worn gothic structure in the narrow street,—the people coming along in groups,—the crowded church-doors, and the broad aisles, as well as the oaken pews and benches filled with one dense mass,—the anxious countenances looking up to the pulpit,—the Puritan divine in his plain black gown and cap,—the reading of the Scriptures,—the solemn prayer,—the sermon, quaint indeed, but full of point and earnestness, and possessing that prime quality, adaptation,—the thrilling appeals at the close of each division of the discourse,—the breathless silence, broken now and then by half-suppressed sobs and supplications,—the hymn swelling in dirge-like notes,—and the benediction, which each would regard as a dismissal to eternity;—for who but must have felt his exposure to the infection while sitting amidst that promiscuous audience? So far as their health was concerned, the prudence of the people

who congregated together in such crowds, at such a season, has been often and fairly questioned; and it may be admitted, that the discourses were not always characterized by as much judgment as could have been wished: yet who that looks at the imminent spiritual danger in which multitudes were placed, but must commend the religious concern which they manifested? and who that takes into account the peculiar circumstances of the preachers, labouring without emolument at the hazard of their lives, but must applaud their apostolic zeal? Nor can it be denied, with the records of that period before us, that, making allowance for much excitement which soon passed away, there remained effects of the most blessed kind resulting from the labours of these men of God. "Through the blessing of God," observes Richard Baxter, "abundance were converted from their carelessness, impenitency, and youthful lusts and vanities, and religion took such a hold on many hearts as could never afterwards be loosed." And it is further worthy of notice, that the persons who were thus busily employed for the good of others, during the plague year, escaped the malady. Mr. Vincent, as appears from the foregoing narrative, was remarkably preserved. Three persons died in his house, but he remained untouched. Baxter mentions that three ministers of extraordinary worth, Mr. Clarkson, Mr. Cradock, and Mr. Terry, were together in one house into which the plague entered, but through the providence of God they were delivered, in answer, as he considers, to fervent prayer on their behalf.

Other methods of usefulness besides preaching were

employed by these apostolic men. In a volume of old broadsheets in the British Museum may be seen, "Short Instructions for the Sick, especially who, by contagion or otherwise, are deprived of the presence of a faithful pastor. By Richard Baxter. Written in the Great Plague Year, 1666." It is full of soul-stirring appeals, such as Baxter knew how to write, and was intended to be pasted on the cottage wall, as a faithful monitor to the plague-stricken inmates.

The plague in London began to decline in the latter part of September. At the end of the year it ceased. The city soon filled again, and resumed its wonted aspect of activity and bustle. The beneficed clergy who had fled re-appeared in their pulpits. The minister of St. Olave's, where Pepys attended, was the first to leave and the last to return. That minute chronicler informs us, that he went with his wife to church to hear this divine preach for the first time to his long-neglected flock, and that he "made a very poor and short excuse, and a bad sermon."

The plague was not confined to London. Many places suffered from its visitations, and were, at the same time, the scenes of ministerial self-denial and activity. A touching story is told respecting the prevalence of the disease at Eyam, a little village in Derbyshire, and the heroism of the clergyman. His name is deserving of grateful remembrance; and in connexion with his, the name of the ejected minister of the same parish, who, though generally forgotten, greatly signalized himself by his exertions. A box of cloth was sent from London to a tailor at Eyam, who, soon after he had taken out the contents, fell sick, and

died. The pestilence presently swept away all in the house save one. It spread from cottage to cottage, and filled them with mourning and lamentation. Every day fresh victims fell. One whole family perished with the exception of a little boy. A gravestone still remains to tell the story,—seven persons of the name of Hancock, it appears from the inscription, died within eight days. The churchyard was not sufficient for the burial of the dead. Graves were dug in the fields, and on the hill-side, where the putrid corpses were hastily interred. The clergyman was Mr. Mompesson, a young man of twenty-eight. His wife, alarmed for the safety of her beloved husband, and their two sweet children, besought him to flee from the fearful scourge; but the minister of Eyam was devoted to his office, and would not leave his flock, though it was to save his life. His zeal, however, was associated with a tender regard for his family, and he earnestly desired the removal of his wife and little ones to some place of security. But with the heroism of a woman's love, while she sought his safety, she was prepared to share his danger; and, agreeing to the removal of the children, she was resolved to remain in the parsonage, to cheer her husband's heart, and aid him in his exertions. And there they were for seven months ministering spirits of mercy. While the Angel of Death was ravaging the village, Mompesson sought to prevent the extension of the disease. In conjunction with the Earl of Devonshire, his patron, who resided at Chatsworth, he arranged that all communication with the neighbouring places should be cut off, and that the inhabitants of Eyam should remain in the village, and calmly await

their fate; that no one should go beyond a boundary marked by certain stones, where people from other parts came and left provisions, and where the buyer was to put the money for the articles in a vessel of clear spring water. A line of circumvallation was thus drawn around the place, and the people were as men besieged, except that the confinement was voluntary, and endured not for the sake of themselves, but others. Combining singular prudence with his fervent zeal, Mompesson provided for the continuance of religious services, without hazarding the health of his parishioners by bringing them into a crowded church. He performed the service in the open air. In Cucklett Dale, beside a running brook, with a rock for his pulpit, and craggy hills on one side, and lofty trees on the other, for the walls of his sanctuary, he and his flock assembled for worship after the manner of the Covenanters. One can see him, with his devoted wife sitting by his side, and can well suppose what must have been the calm energy of such a man in preaching at such a time. He was wonderfully preserved from contagion, by means, it was thought, of an incision in his legs, to which he was persuaded to have recourse by her whose life was bound up in his. The plague was just about to decline, and health to be restored to the village, when the noble-hearted wife of Mompesson fell a victim to its power: and so the joy that he felt on the disappearance of the pestilence, and its limited range, effected through the blessing of God on his wise precautions, was dashed with this bitter sorrow. Disinterestedness seems to have been the very soul of this good man's life; for when offered the Deanery of

Lincoln, he declined it in favour of his friend Dr. Fuller.

This worthy minister of the Establishment deserves, as he has received, the praises of posterity; but let not Thomas Stanley, the minister who was ejected from the living of Eyam by the Bartholomew Act, and who remained in the village during the plague year, be forgotten. He could not preach to the people whom he loved; but by visitation, advice, and prayer, he sought to promote both their temporal and spiritual interests. There were some who looked with jealousy upon the efforts of this worthy Puritan, and endeavoured to persuade the Earl of Devonshire to remove him from the place. Surely the generous Mompesson could not have concurred in this intolerant recommendation! But whoever might be the enemies of Mr. Stanley, the Earl was his friend, and replied to their solicitations by observing, "It is more reasonable that the whole country should testify their thankfulness to him, who, together with his care of the town, had taken such care *as none else did* to prevent the infection of the towns adjacent." So that it appears Stanley is at least entitled to a very large share of the credit of those judicious plans exclusively ascribed to Mompesson.

These are instances of heroic activity. The history of Puritanism also supplies examples of heroic endurance. Samuel Shaw was ejected from the rectory of Long Whatton, in Leicestershire. He retired to the small village of Coates, near Loughborough, and there engaged in agricultural pursuits, for the support of his family. His fields were ripe for the sickle,—the valleys were covered over with corn,—the little hills

rejoiced on every side; and the good man shared in Nature's joy, as he looked upon the smiling scenes which spread round his quiet homestead, and anticipated the in-gathering of the harvest,—“little dreaming,” as he tells us, “of the plague, which was almost a hundred miles off.” Some Christian friends from London came down to see him, and brought the infection; for soon the plague-spot appeared in one of the members of the household, and touched another, and another, till all were smitten, and the farm cottage became a pest-house. People now dreaded to approach the place; and the master of the dwelling was anxious to prevent the spread of the contagion. Thus he was shut up in that abode of suffering for three months, tending the sick and performing other painful offices, as his own health permitted; for he was himself affected by the malady, but mercifully restored. Two of his children died, on whom he doted with a fondness which, in a tone of very fervent spirituality, he afterwards confessed and deplored. One of his servants died: two of his friends from London also died. Thus five out of ten at that time residing with him were cut off. Though he must himself have been enfeebled by sickness, there was no one else to perform the last rites of sepulture; hence he turned his garden into a graveyard, and with his own hands there buried the dead. What a scene of desolation and sorrow, enough to crush the most elastic spirit! But Mr. Shaw was a choice example of the heroism of endurance, sustained by the power of religion. In the beautiful little volume he afterwards published, entitled “Welcome to the Plague,” which contains, in

an expanded form, a sermon he preached to his family while suffering from the visitation, he describes his elevated state of mind during that afflictive season. "Let me call upon men and angels," he exclaims in the preface, "to help me in celebrating the infinite and almighty grace and goodness of the eternal and blessed God, who enabled me to abide the day of his coming, to stand when He appeared, and made me willing to suffer Him to sit as a refiner of silver in my house,—who carried me above all murmurings against, I had almost said, all remembrance of those instruments that conveyed the infection to me,—who reconciled my heart to this disease, so that it seemed no more grievous or noisome than any other,—who subdued me to, I had almost said, brought me in love with this passage of the Divine will. I can remember (alas! that I can say little more than that I do remember) how my soul was overpowered, yea, almost ravished, with the goodness, holiness, and perfection of the will of God; and verily judged it my happiness and perfection, as well as my duty, to comply cheerfully with it, and be moulded into it;—who gave me a most powerful and quick sense of the plague of a carnal heart, self-will, and inordinate creature-love, convincing me that those were infinitely worse than the plague in the flesh;—who wonderfully preserved me from the assaults of the devil, never let him loose so much as to try his strength upon my integrity, to drive me to a despondency or to any uncharitable conclusions concerning my state;—who enabled me to converse with his love and mercy, in the midst of his chastening,—to see his shining and smiling face

through this dark cloud; yea, kept up clear and steady persuasions in my soul that I was beloved of Him, though afflicted by Him;—who knew my soul in adversity; visited me when I was sick and in prison; refreshed, strengthened, and comforted my inner man in a marvellous manner and measure, and made me appear to myself never less shut up than when shut up. Oh, would to God I might be never worse than when I was shut up of the plague! The not removing that affliction-frame I shall account a greater blessing, and a more proper mercy, than the removing that afflicted state,—Who cleared up my evidence in his Son, strengthened my evidences of his love, and satisfied and assured my soul of its happy state, more than at all times formerly. I had clearer and surer evidences of Divine grace in that patient, self-denying, self-submitting frame of spirit, than in all the duties that I ever performed. The valley of tears brought me more sight of my God, and more insight into myself, than ever the valley of visions, all duties and ordinances, had done. When the Sun of Righteousness arose on my soul, and chased away all the mists and fogs of self-will and creature-love, then also did all black and dismal fears, all gloomy doubts, most sensibly flee before Him,—Who supplied my family, from compassionate friends, with all things needful for food and physic (the Lord return it sevenfold into their bosoms!)—Who maintained my health in the midst of sickness, in the midst of so great a death! I do not remember that either sorrow of mind, or sickness of body, ever prevailed so much upon me, during three months' seclusion, as to hinder me of my ordinary

study, repast, devotions, or my necessary attendance upon my several infected rooms, and administering to the necessities of my sick." These are sentiments such as never inspired this world's heroes. They must surely awaken the admiration of every reader, and induce a devout wish that, amidst the calamities of life, he may sympathize with this heavenly-minded Puritan in the enjoyment of such Divine consolations. The secret cause of this elevated tone of religious feeling was, no doubt, his habit of intense devotion. His extraordinary depth of feeling, vigour of thought, and felicity of expression in prayer, are particularly mentioned by an intimate friend; and the circumstances under which he sometimes prayed with his fellow-confessors, in those days of persecution, were such as to enhance the impressions which his devotional exercises left upon their minds. What a picture does the following passage supply! "I have sometimes been in Mr. Shaw's company for a whole night together, when we have been obliged to steal to the place in the dark, stop out the light, and stop in the voice, by clothing and fast closing the windows, till the first daybreak down a chimney has given us notice to be gone. I bless God for such seasons." These Puritans were princes on the earth,—for they had power with God, and they prevailed!

Such were some of the Puritans of the plague year. —What were Charles and his Parliament doing at Oxford, while disease ravaged the kingdom, and the persecuted Nonconformists exhibited edifying examples of piety, and laboured to supply the lack of service on the part of their endowed brethren? It might have

been expected that at such a time the cords of persecution would be relaxed; yet it was in this very plague year that the Five-mile Act was passed. This infamous statute enacted that no one in holy orders should be allowed to fill the office of tutor or schoolmaster, or to come within five miles of any city, corporate town, or borough sending members to Parliament, unless he took a certain oath. The oath was to the effect that in no case was it lawful to take up arms against the King,—and that it was to be abhorred as a traitorous position, that persons might take arms by his authority against his person, or against those commissioned by him:—the oath further bound the individual, not to endeavour at any time to procure an alteration of the government, either in Church or State. The Act was levelled at the Dissenters, who, though loyal, had not all learned the doctrine of unconditional submission; and who could not but desire, and endeavour by *legal* means to procure, some change in the present political constitution of things. A high judicial authority expounded the oath as referring only to unlawful endeavours; and with that understanding, some excellent men were induced to take it: but others, who could not admit such a construction of the words, felt compelled by conscience to decline this adjuration, and to endure the penalty. Some of them, though silenced as public teachers, had remained in cities and towns, the spheres of their former ministry, and by private visitation and worship kept up a connexion with the more devoted members of their old flocks. This new Act required them to exile themselves from these homes, endeared to them by many pleasing associations; and

in many cases, to separate themselves from friends, on whose voluntary benevolence they and their families were entirely dependent. Some, in strict obedience to the merciless mandate, went forth, "not knowing whither they went." Others left their wives and children by day, to secrete themselves in neighbouring woods and retired spots, and then return under cover of the night: but many stayed where they were, and preached more openly than ever, resolved to brave the vengeance of the iniquitous laws. An historian of the Nonconformists observes that their straits were great,—for the country was so impoverished, that those who were willing to relieve them had generally no great ability. And yet did God mercifully provide some supplies for them, so that scarce any of them perished for want, or were exposed to sordid beggary: but some few were tempted against their former judgments to conform.* The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Salisbury were the chief promoters of this measure; and there were men among the inferior clergy very zealous for its enforcement. It is recorded of Mr. Woodbridge, an eminent minister ejected from Newbury, in Berkshire, that on his removal from the town, in consequence of the Five-mile Act, his successor, Mr. Sawyer, thinking that he had not removed sufficiently far, got the ground measured by night, and was disappointed to find that his poor brother was actually out of his reach.

* Calamy. See Introduction to Palmer's Nonconformist Memorial, sec. 6.

CHAPTER XII.

TOLERANCE AND PERSECUTION.

THE year 1672 is remarkable in the annals of the reign of Charles II. He was reduced to bankruptcy. Parliamentary supplies and French pensions had been expended upon the payment of his debts and the gratification of his vices: and now, by the advice of one of his unprincipled ministers, he betook himself to the resource of closing the exchequer, and suspending the payment of interest on the national debt* for twelve months; thereby creating a commercial panic, and occasioning untold miseries in domestic life. While the country was confounded at this stroke of iniquitous policy, the public confusion was increased, first by the announcement that the English admiral had attempted to seize the rich freight of the Dutch Smyrna fleet, and then by a declaration of war against Holland, founded upon pretences, of which some were frivolous, and others unjust. The last Dutch war, so disgraceful to England, was fresh in the memory of the people, and the proclamation of a new attack upon

* The *national debt*, properly so called, did not commence till the reign of William III.; but an unfunded debt existed in the time of the second Charles,—to that of course reference is here made.

the States of Holland, especially with an empty exchequer, appeared to every honourable and reflecting mind, a measure of which the iniquity was equalled only by the folly. "No clap of thunder in a fair frosty day could more astonish the world," observes Sir William Temple, "than our declaration of war against Holland in 1672."

It was in this memorable year, and just before the commencement of the Dutch war, that Charles published his famous Declaration of Indulgence. Its benefits were offered alike to Protestant Nonconformists and Popish Recusants. The avowed object was the promotion of internal concord on the eve of a foreign war,—the real motive is considered, and not without good reason, to have been a desire to pave the way for the future ascendancy of Popery by its present toleration. This design was at the basis of the existing treaty with France; the accomplishment of which was, in part, the service for which the English monarch received his French pension. So far as such a thoughtless being could be said to be guided by any policy, the establishment of Popery was no doubt the policy of Charles. The persecution of the Nonconformists seems to have been arranged, in a great measure, with a view to its probable effect upon the prospects of the Papacy. We learn from the *Memoirs of James II.*, "that the rigorous partizans of the Church of England were permitted to persecute the Nonconformists at their discretion. They were even encouraged in this, the better to make the latter appreciate the relief they would derive from the triumph of the Catholics." * On


* Carrel's "Counter Revolution in England," p. 90.

the other hand, the toleration of the Dissenters was made to serve as a veil for the favour shown to the Popish party.

Charles, before this, had occasionally connived at public Nonconforming worship. He had, even as early as the year 1663, proclaimed an indulgence, and set forth his purpose to exercise a dispensing power with the consent of Parliament; but now, in the exercise of an absolute authority, resembling in its unconstitutional spirit the proceedings of his father, but differing from them in its apparent liberality, the royal will dispensed with Acts of Parliament, and of itself boldly suspended the penal laws in ecclesiastical matters. Only one opinion can be formed of the character of the proceeding in relation to constitutional law; and therefore it is not surprising that many intelligent Dissenters, seeing how the ark of the Constitution was imperilled, scrupled to avail themselves of the proffered indulgence. Others, especially those of the Presbyterian class, influenced by their deep hatred of Popish principles, and perhaps seeing through the designs of Charles and his Court, condemned the proceeding on religious rather than political grounds. Regarding it, therefore, as a sort of Trojan horse, pregnant with evils, there were some who declined to welcome or to touch it, and preferred to remain as they were, till relief in an unexceptionable manner should arrive. But the majority were of another mind. Wearied with long years of persecution, with only occasional and temporary suspensions of virulent intolerance, they were glad to avail themselves of liberty, let it come from what quarter it might. It

is not improbable that some troubled themselves but little, if at all, respecting the constitutional question. It is certain that others, who clearly apprehended the political bearings of the measure, and who dreaded the progress of Catholicism, considered, notwithstanding, that to avail themselves of a right, to which they were entitled on grounds of natural justice, was only reasonable, and involved no approbation of the manner, or the suspected design of its bestowment.

Most of the Congregational ministers, both in the metropolis and the country, took out licences under the King's hand and seal, in accordance with the terms of the Declaration. Many a congregation was formed, or re-gathered, during the period that the Indulgence remained in force. Old places of worship were publicly visited once more, and new ones were erected and prepared for the infant churches which were formed. In spite of the medium through which their liberty was conceded, Nonconformists rejoiced in its enjoyment, and traced its origin back to His hand by whom kings rule, and who maketh the wrath of man to praise Him. They were like the emancipated Jews, and, looking beyond the decrees of an earthly monarch, could devoutly say, "And now for a little space grace hath been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage." Memorials of certain places where these persecuted ones resumed their worship still remain. The Norwich Puritans, both Presbyterian and Independent, emerged from their concealment, and took possession of part of the remains of the



fine old Blackfriars' Convent, which was granted them by the city for the purpose. The cloisters were, at that time, standing with the buildings on the eastern and western side, formerly used as a refectory and a dormitory. These, since the Reformation, had been turned into granaries for the city corn, but, being now disused, were accommodated to Dissenting worship,—the Presbyterians occupying the old dormitory, and their brethren of the Congregational order using the refectory. It may be noticed as curiously illustrating the liberality, and probably the comparative means of the two congregations, that at a Court of Mayoralty, on the 27th November, 1672, the officers of the Independent Congregation are reported to have brought twenty-five shillings and fourpence, the amount of a collection made for one Cotton's child—some object of suffering no further known;—and the officers of the Presbyterian Congregation, at the other granary, three pounds eleven shillings and fourpence for the relief of the same individual.* Our Norwich Nonconformists must have been respected by their fellow-citizens, or the latter would not have permitted them to assemble in a place which was public property, and under the control of the Corporation. Other facts tend to show that in the minds of many there was a disposition to treat with neighbourly kindness their Dissenting brethren, and to afford them facilities for worship. It may not be generally known, that in some cases even the parish authorities were so favourably inclined to the Nonconformists as to permit them to worship within consecrated walls. Gardiner, in his History of

* Kirkpatrick's History of Religious Orders in Norwich, p. 84.

Dunwich and Southwold, states, that through the indulgence of "Master Sharpen, the parish minister, the Separatists were favoured with the free use of the church, where they resorted weekly or oftener, and every fourth Sunday both ministers met and celebrated Divine worship alternately. He that entered the church first had the precedence of officiating; the other keeping silence until the congregation was renewed at the benediction. Most of the people attended throughout the two services." The liberty of using the parish-church was also enjoyed by the Nonconformists of Walsham-le-Willows, a small village in Suffolk; and in connexion with this circumstance a ludicrous occurrence is related.* On one occasion, when Mr. Salkeld, the Congregational minister, was occupying the parish pulpit, Sir Edmund Bacon of Redgrave, premier baronet of England, and Sir William Spring of Pakenham, greatly scandalized at what they deemed a profanation of the holy edifice, came with divers other gentlemen to the church, and planted themselves at the doors. Sir Edmund was for compelling the minister immediately to desist; but Sir William was for patiently waiting till he had finished his discourse. Whereupon a noisy altercation arose in the churchyard between these two personages; and when Sir Edmund Bacon had become outrageously violent, his friend observed, "We read, Sir Edmund, that the devil entered into a herd of swine, and, upon my word, I think he has not got out of the Bacon yet."

The persons who composed the congregations, avail-

* I find this anecdote in a MS. History of the Suffolk Churches, by the Rev. T. Harmer, author of "Observations on Scripture."

ing themselves of Charles's Indulgence, were, for the most part, of the middling and the lower class; but some of a higher rank were associated with them. Individuals of this description had identified themselves with the Presbyterian or Congregational denomination when in the ascendant; and now that the times were changed, though many had gone over to the Established religion, a few remained firm to their former profession. No congregation, perhaps, was so remarkable for having in it persons of distinction, as that which enjoyed the pastoral superintendence of Dr. Owen, the late Vice-Chancellor of Oxford.* Caryl, the famous commentator on Job, had a congregation which met in Leadenhall-street; and on his death in 1673, the persons composing it formed a union with Owen's church, which met somewhere in the neighbourhood. By the junction of the two, a very strong and influential society was formed, including a number of celebrated characters worthy of remembrance. Their place of meeting cannot be determined, but the list of members preserved enables us to picture to ourselves the assembly which Owen addressed. Yonder sits my Lord Charles Fleetwood, Cromwell's son-in-law, whom Milton has eulogized as inferior to none in humanity, in gentleness, and in benignity of disposition; and whom Noble admits to have been a man of religion, and a venerator of religious liberty. Colonel John Desborough is just by him—a staunch Republican—a man of rather rough manners, but a hero, whose name, together with that of Fleetwood, Milton has embalmed. Major-General Berry, too, is there, once

* See Note [27].

a friend of Baxter's, and applauded by him as a man of sincere piety, till he forfeited that excellent person's favour by becoming an Independent. Young Sir John Hartop, a man of singular intelligence and piety, is of the number, as well as his amiable and pious lady. Other ladies of distinction may be pointed out: the Lady Tompson, wife of Sir John Tompson;* Lady Vere Wilkinson; Mrs. Abney; and especially deserving of notice, more however for her eccentricities than her excellences, Mrs. — Bendish,† grand-daughter of Oliver Cromwell. These illustrious personages give a stamp of nobility to this Nonconforming congregation; and they deserve all honour for their firmness of character and integrity of principle, in adhering to a cause often trampled upon by persecution, and always ridiculed by the wits of Charles's court. As they left the conventicle in their coaches, or walked through the city homewards on foot, perhaps the finger of scorn was pointed at these noble Puritans: but they felt within themselves an ample reward in the testimony of a good conscience; to say nothing of the instructions they had received, and the hallowed emotions they had experienced, as they heard the prince of divines, with logical acuteness, explain and defend the doctrine of justification by faith, or with rapturous fervour descant on the glory of Christ. Now that I am speaking of persons among the higher classes favourable to Nonconformity, some others of noble name may be mentioned, who, though not members of

* Afterwards Lord Haversham.

† See Anecdotes of Mrs. Bendish, in Noble's *Memoirs of the Protectoral House of Cromwell*, vol. ii. p. 329.

Owen's church, were his especial friends. The Earls of Orrery and Anglesea — the Lords Willoughby, Wharton, and Berkeley, were of the number. These were all men of the Puritan stamp, and of admitted piety; perhaps the Earl of Anglesea, certainly Lord Wharton, was a Nonconformist.*

But the days were numbered, during which, for the present, the noble or the plebeian Nonconformist was permitted to worship God in peace. The Declaration of Indulgence, issued by Charles in 1672, was withdrawn in the course of the following year. The House of Commons declared against the dispensing power; and Alderman Love, one of the members for the city of London, himself a Dissenter, declared that he had rather go without his own desired liberty, than have it in a way so destructive of the liberties of his country and the Protestant interest; and this, he added, "was the sense of the main body of Dissenters." How the latter statement by this gentleman is to be reconciled with the fact, that so large a number of Nonconformists availed themselves of the Indulgence, it is difficult to say. Perhaps he alluded to the Presbyterians, who were generally more averse than their Independent brethren to the Indulgence; and yet it is evident that a number of them took advantage of the Declaration. But whatever might be the extent to which his remark was correctly applicable, certainly, the circumstance that any persons were ready to forego their own liberty, rather than do what, as they conceived, would countenance a violation of constitutional

* Many particulars respecting Owen's friends are given by Mr. Orme, in his valuable *Life of Owen*, pp. 277—289.

principles, or be a connivance at friendship shown to error, betokened the heroic cast of their patriotism and their piety. Thus condemned for the policy he had adopted, Charles renounced his Declaration, broke the seal with his own hands, and recalled the licences for Nonconforming worship.

It was a legal toleration which the Dissenters desired. After all that had passed, they reasonably hoped that their desire would be gratified—but in vain. The Commons were in favour of it: it was resolved unanimously, that a bill should be brought in for the relief of his Majesty's Protestant subjects who were Dissenters; but the measure, says Echard, was dropped in the House of Lords, on account of some amendments, till the Parliament broke up. "More truly," says another authority, "because the dead weight of the Bishops joined with the King and the caballing party against it."* The Test Act followed closely upon the failure of this measure; and as its avowed purpose was to exclude the Catholics from office, though it was equally unfavourable to Protestant Nonconformists, there were persons of the latter class, who, with more of honest zeal against Popery than enlightened views of freedom, or even religion, supported the unrighteous and profane enactment.

The reign of intolerance was now restored, and the weight of its iron sceptre was felt by Dissenters of every class. The men who, rather than countenance an exercise of illegal power, or share their liberty with the Papists, had rejected the Indulgence, or supported the Test Act, must have felt how cruelly they were

* Neal's Puritans, vol. iv. p. 458.

rewarded for their zeal; while others, who had taken no part in either proceeding, found themselves treated in the same way. The Court, incensed at being thwarted in their plans respecting Popery, despatched an immense tribe of informers to ferret out the Nonconformists. The laws against them were severely enforced: the estates of the rich were ordered to be seized, and the persons of the ministers to be apprehended. "The drum ecclesiastic" was loudly beaten; and a High Churchman, in his sermon before the House of Commons, told them that the Nonconformists could be cured only by vengeance; and that the best way was to set fire to the faggot, and to teach these obstinate people by scourges or scorpions, and open their eyes with gall.*

Places of public Dissenting worship were now closed; and the proscribed worshippers, if they would still serve the Almighty as their conscience dictated, must do so in concealment. Many were the ingenious devices they adopted to screen themselves from the notice, or to elude the pursuit, of the quick-sighted and dogged informer. The tourist who has visited that fine old Tudor mansion at Compton Wyneates, in Warwickshire, will remember the chapel in the roof, and the secret passages in the walls, contrived for the safety of the Popish recusants;† or if he has seen Oxburgh Hall, in Norfolk, will recollect the dark recess, through a small arched closet, with a trap-door concealed in the pavement,‡ probably intended as a

* Neal's Puritans, vol. iv. p. 465.

† Described in Howitt's Visits to Remarkable Places.

‡ Described in Colman's Etchings.

refuge for the Catholic clergy. Similar contrivances were adopted by Protestant Nonconformists, in the times of persecution. There was one existing, not long since, among the ruins of the old priory of Bartholomew, in Smithfield, consisting of subterranean passages and doors in the crypt, which tradition reported to have been used by Nonconformists and their ministers in the days of Charles II. There are also written records of divers expedients for concealment and escape invented by Puritan worthies. The records of the Baptist Church, Broadmead, Bristol, are peculiarly rich in such illustrations; and the simplicity and fulness of detail with which these matters are recorded, give them a kind of pictorial effect.*

More solicitous for the safety of their minister than themselves, they made special arrangements to protect him from the informer and the justices. They hung up a curtain in the place where they assembled, and placed the minister behind it; so that if an informer came in, he should not be able to identify the person of the speaker. None but friends were allowed to sit within the space thus marked off by the curtain; in consequence of which, the strangers who came as spies were defeated in their object, in so far as the apprehension of the preacher was concerned. When a suspicious person was recognised, the people, by a preconcerted signal, began to sing, and continued the exercise till he left the room, when the minister resumed his discourse. Another congregation in Bristol, at the same time, adopted a similar plan, only substituting a wainscot-board for a curtain: and a third

* They have been published by the Hansard Knollys Society.

party in their meetings would place a few tall men round the speaker, who stood over a trap-door; and when an informer was observed, the door was removed, and the preacher instantly disappeared, to make his escape through the cellar.

The Broadmead records afford us many such glimpses of the sufferings and vexations of our Puritan ancestors: they place us in the Bristol of the seventeenth century; rendering us familiar with the citizens, both High Church and Nonconformist; and giving an idea of the state of the Dissenters in the reign of Charles II., far more vivid and correct than can be conveyed by any general statements. We see how incessantly, except during the periods of regal indulgence, these conscientious men were harassed by their unprincipled persecutors. The informer was ever on the watch—tracking their path, discovering their retreats, and pouncing on his victims. The Broadmead records, in this respect, only exhibit a specimen of what was going on in hundreds of towns and villages throughout the land. Not more frequent in those days, when old English sports continued to amuse the nobility and gentry, was the flight of the hawk, freed from his jess and hood, gliding through the air like a meteor, and striking his quarry as with a flash of lightning,—than was the prowling abroad of the informer, who, freed from all the restraints of justice and humanity, pursued with the keenest eye, and seized with merciless vengeance, the ill-fated sectary. The favourite bird of our forefathers, however, is dishonoured by the comparison; for, with all its rapacity, these informers had none of its useful and noble qualities. Sprung from

the dregs of the people, mean and dastardly to the last degree, and spending their ill-gotten gains in gambling and debauchery,—such persons were as much the objects of abhorrence to the respectable portion of the community in general, as they were the objects of terror to the innocent class whom the laws proscribed. Destitute of religion and the fear of God, caring not at all for the Divine worship performed in the churches, though professing themselves such zealous Churchmen, these informers spent the Lord's day in disturbing the worship of others, and in tracing the footsteps of the suspected Nonconformist, when he left his dwelling. In coffee-houses and places of public resort, during the week, these despicable characters, like the spies of the Inquisition, were frequent visitors,—lying in wait to catch the unwary in their talk, or to obtain some clue to the discovery of unknown frequenters of the conventicle. Many of these men, infamous in their life, were wretched in death, and perished in poverty, shame, and despair,—smitten, as their pious victims sometimes thought, by the avenging hand of God. Some died in prison; and one of this unhappy fraternity, who was confined for debt, wrote to Baxter, whom he had often harassed, and acknowledged that his calamities were just retributions for his treatment of that man of God.

In many instances, the Puritan ministers had hairbreadth escapes from the eye and fang of the pursuer. Ingenious devices were adopted by the oppressed, that they might elude the oppressor. Though many a sentimentalist in our days, who has a sigh for poor Charles and his Cavaliers, as romantic tales are told of their

concealment during the Commonwealth, can look with cold indifference upon the deeds and sufferings of our Puritan confessors,—minds of a higher tone will thrill with interest while perusing the story of the adventures and escapes of these virtuous and pious men.

It is related of James Janeway, the bright ornament of a family renowned for its spiritual excellence, that once, as he was walking by the wall at Rotherhithe, a bullet was fired at him by a wretch, who was exasperated by his popularity and success as a minister. It is further stated, that a mob of soldiers once broke into his meeting-house in Jamaica-row, and, leaping upon the benches, endeavoured to seize upon the youthful and amiable divine, while he was preaching, as he was wont to do, with an unction that might have softened the hardest hearts. Availing themselves of the confusion, some of his friends threw over him a coloured coat, and put on his head a white hat,—so that the disfigured minister escaped unobserved. At another time, when he was preaching in a gardener's house, several troopers came to seize him; but he threw himself on the ground, and his friends covered him with cabbage-leaves, so that he again escaped.*

John Syme, another worthy of those days, ejected from the living of Dean Prior, in Devonshire, was once so closely pursued by his enemies, that he hid himself in a hay-loft, when some of the party in searching for him thrust their swords through the hay, yet the good man escaped. And the venerable Richard Chantrye,

* Palmer's Nonconf. Memorial, vol. iii. p. 512.

the friend and fellow-student of Samuel Shaw, residing in an obscure village in Derbyshire, near the place of his nativity, successfully guarded for years against the informers, by going out in the twilight habited as a husbandman, with a fork on his shoulder and the Bible in his pocket, to meet the little company who thirsted for his instructions; thus resembling "the zealous and courageous builders of the walls of Jerusalem, who with one hand wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon."*

The ministers, of course, were marked men. They were among the first to be seized and punished,—but sometimes their apprehension led to considerable popular excitement on their side, so that it became rather hazardous for magistrates to meddle with them. When the persecution of the Conventiclers was renewed with violence in 1682, there was a Mr. Francis Bampfield, the ejected Vicar of Sherborne, who used to preach at Pinner's Hall, where he was rudely seized and dragged out of the pulpit. A multitude of the London citizens followed through the streets; and, as this example of persecution roused their Protestant feelings, they exclaimed, "See how he walks with the Bible in his hand, like one of the old martyrs!" The exclamation betokened that popular sympathy was with the persecuted, not with the persecutor. When these men were regarded as successors of the Latimers and Riddleys of the former century, it was a dangerous ex-

* Nonconf. Mem. vol. iii. p. 244. It is recorded of Mr. Chantyre, that in his old age, when unable to stand, he was drawn in a chair to the room where his hearers met, and there he sat and preached to them. The old chair is still preserved in the Library of Coward College, London.

periment for Protestant rulers, so called, to send out their myrmidons to arrest such venerated characters. It could not fail to deepen disaffection to the existing Government, and to prepare for a revolution which should better secure the liberty of innocent and virtuous subjects. Common sense could not but revolt, and natural feeling recoil at such monstrous doings; and no one can be surprised at learning, that when some of the Bishops were dining with Sir Nath. Hern, Sheriff of London in 1676, and urging him to put the laws against Dissent into execution, he told them candidly,—“They could not trade with their neighbours one day, and send them to the gaol the next.” There can be no doubt, that this London sheriff uttered a sentiment which extensively prevailed; and that it would be unjust to the Englishmen in general of the last half of the seventeenth century, to suppose that their feelings were represented by hireling informers, and by the interested parties who urged them on.

Still, however, the storm of persecution raged with more or less violence to the end of Charles's reign. In 1681, the fury of the High Church party was stimulated to persecute the Nonconformists, as the great allies of the Whigs. The laws of Elizabeth and James were revived against frequenting conventicles, and being absent from church, and large sums were extorted in the shape of fines. It is said that in Uxbridge alone, two hundred warrants of distress were issued about this time. In the following year fresh orders were issued from the Council-board to suppress the meetings of Dissenters; in consequence of which

many ministers were imprisoned, and they and their hearers fined. In the records of the Church once assembling in St. Thomas, Southwark, I find an account of the persecution of the excellent Nathaniel Vincent, in 1682. Justice Spires of the Bridge House, and several other justices and officers, disturbed Mr. Vincent's congregation, and commanded him, in the King's name, to desist from preaching; upon which the preacher, in the name of the King of kings, commanded them to forbear interrupting him. He was summoned to appear at the next quarter sessions at Dorking; and on the Lord's day previous, preached to the people in his own meeting-house from the appropriate words,—“Only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” “There was,” says the Church-Book, “a numerous auditory, inso-much that the people were ready to tread one upon another, and some hundreds went away that could not come near to hear him. In these sermons, he earnestly pressed us to hold fast our profession, and to be steadfast in the cause of Christ. The 4th of January, before Mr. Vincent went to his trial, there was a solemn day of fasting and prayer kept at his own meeting place, to seek the Lord on his behalf. On the 8th, there was a whole night spent in prayer. On the 9th he went to Dorking, and had his trial on the 10th, when he was not suffered to speak in his own defence, but was found guilty of the indictment, and was committed prisoner to the Marshalsea, in South-

wark, for three months; and then, if he would not conform according to that statute, he was to abjure the realm or suffer death." The Church deprived of their pastor was much harassed by their enemies; and we are informed, that on "the 10th day of this month, being Saturday, one Justice Balsh, a silk throwster by trade, and a very bitter enemy to the Lord's people living in Spittlefields, having sent word to the other justices of the peace, his brethren that lived in those parts, that he would meet them very early the next morning, to disturb the Whiggs at their meeting places (for so they called Dissenters at that time), about 8 of the clock at night, died suddenly in his chair, and never spake a word."—"The 11th we met in Aldersgate-street at a cloth-worker's, where Mr. Biggin the minister had but just begun prayer, but we were disturbed by the train-bands."—"April the first, we met at Mr. Russell's, in Ironmonger-lane, where Mr. Lambert administered to us the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and *we sung a psalm with a low voice.*"

In the same year, the Broadmead records bear testimony to the rigour of the laws and the activity of the informers. "On the 2nd of July (Lord's day)," it is observed, "our pastor preached in the wood. Our friends took much pains in the rain, because many informers were ordered out to search; and we were in peace, though there were near twenty men and boys in search.—On the 14th November, a day of prayer, having some hours together in the wood, between London and Sodbury Road, the enemies came upon us unawares, and seized about eight persons, but the

history of the second Charles's reign. Imagination is ever and anon placing side by side the picture of the confessor's dungeon and the voluptuary's palace. Let the eye turn from such records as those of the Church at Bristol, to glance over the pages of the Count Grammont, and the heart sickens with disgust. The scenes which that elegant writer depicts, the characters he draws, and the intrigues he unravels,—the entire want of moral principle, the absence of common shame, the barefaced licentiousness, the devices to excite and gratify the lowest passions of our nature, which the author, who had lived at Court and shared in its pleasures, so graphically and with perfect complacency portrays, makes us blush for humanity. The reaction from the simple manners and severe virtues of the Puritan Commonwealth had been tremendous. Courage, or rather an irritable sense of honour, leading the gallant to wreak revenge upon any who offended him, was the chief, if not the only virtue of courtiers. Vices, and even crimes of foul description, were treated as foibles, undeserving of harsh condemnation: liveliness and wit were alone esteemed meritorious; and “the manners of Chesterfield were united with the morals of Rochefoucault.” The book of the Count is indeed a picture of the age—elegant in style, but licentious in character,—a veil of embroidered gauze thrown over the features of a putrescent corpse. The pure and virtuous turn with horror from the object, not in the least degree reconciled to its deformity by the transparent decoration which covers it.

The death of Charles brought but little and short

relief to the Nonconformists. His successor, indeed, though Head of the Church, and Defender of the Faith, was practically a Popish Dissenter, and therefore was bound in all consistency to tolerate Dissent. Hence the Quakers, in their address of congratulation to James II., observe, with exquisite naïveté, or with satirical shrewdness,—“We are told thou art not of the persuasion of the Church of England, no more than we; therefore, we hope thou wilt grant us the same liberty which thou allowest thyself, which doing we wish thee all manner of happiness.” But neither they nor their brethren profited much by the King’s dissent. It is true that, at first, the penal laws concerning religion were relaxed for the sake of the Papists, a circumstance which yielded some advantage to Protestant Nonconformists; but the spirit of persecution was, in fact, only gathering up strength for a fresh and more dreadful onset upon liberty and justice. James let loose the High Church party upon the poor Dissenters, intending thereby at once to conciliate the former, who were supporters of the prerogative, and to crush the latter, who were known to be inexorably opposed to his arbitrary designs. The result was soon manifest. The trade of the informer revived. The Spiritual Courts were brought into play, and filled with causes. The conventicle was broken up. The minister was seized. The justice of the peace exacted a fine or sent him to prison. His house was ransacked,—rooms and closets were broken up,—the privacy of domestic life was invaded with rudeness and incivility. The shop-keeper was taken from his business; the husband was separated from his wife; parents were dragged away

from their children; and families were compelled to remove from their habitations to a distance, that they might escape their oppressors. Vast numbers of Dissenters were imprisoned,—and of those who were saved from the dungeon, many were mulcted in exorbitant fines. Officers broke in upon the mansions of Sir John Hartop, Mr. Fleetwood, and other Nonconformist worthies in Stoke Newington, to levy distresses to the amount of six or seven thousand pounds. Baxter, the Puritan patriarch, was peculiarly obnoxious to the ruling powers; and the story of his trial, by the infamous Jeffreys, will ever remain prominent and unparalleled in the religious history of our country, for the fierce and vulgar intolerance which it records. Where fines were not extorted by the iron hand of law, bribes were often wrung by the informer from his detected victim; and the opulent Dissenter was glad to get out of the clutches of the harpy by sending him a present of wine, or by dropping into his hand a few pieces of gold. When Divine worship according to Dissenting usages was performed, it could only be done in concealment. The expedients adopted in the former reign were renewed. These worthies would do and suffer anything rather than renounce their principles. “How warm was the zeal of our forefathers!” exclaims Neal, “and what hazards did they run for the freedom of their consciences!” Some, indeed, as might be expected, proved faithless to their profession, and sought refuge from such intolerable oppression in the bosom of the Establishment; while it is remarkable, that some who had been educated in the forms, and had ministered in the pulpits of that Establishment, seeing jus-

tice and humanity outraged by its rulers, left the Church in disgust, and cast in their lot with the sufferers for conscience sake.

There were two Nonconformists at this period who deserve special notice, on account of the moral heroism with which they endured their trials. They were not, indeed, arraigned and punished for their profession of Nonconformity; but it was their attachment to that cause which led them to act so as to expose them to the inhuman treatment which they received. Mrs. (sometimes called Lady) Alicia Lisle was brought to the bar at Winchester, before the hard-hearted and profligate Jeffreys, charged with having concealed Mr. Hicks, a Presbyterian clergyman, and a person named Nelson, one of the insurgents engaged in the battle of Sedgemoor, in Monmouth's rebellion. Of Nelson, there is reason to believe that she knew nothing; and respecting Hicks, she confessed, "I knew him to be a Nonconformist minister; and there being, as is well known, warrants out to apprehend all Nonconformist ministers, I was willing to give him shelter from these warrants." It was an office of Christian kindness she had performed, stimulated by sympathy for one in sorrow who professed with her a common faith: but this perfectly innocent, and, as she thought, laudable deed, was construed into an act of treason: and the cowardly jury, though they expressed their dissatisfaction with the evidence adduced to criminate her, were bullied by the brutal judge into a verdict of guilty. "Gentlemen," he exclaimed, "in your place, I would find her guilty were she my own mother." The venerable matron, weighed down under a load of years—

for she was now more than seventy—was subject to fits, and could hear but imperfectly; yet, throughout her trial, she evinced a singular tranquillity and collectedness of mind, and, save when drowsiness overcame her feeble frame, exhibited a dignified demeanour. Her behaviour on the scaffold was in harmony with her bearing in court; and in the course of a speech which she delivered to the sheriff, and which contained remarks on her unjust trial, she freely forgave all her enemies, and expressed a desire to possess her soul in patience. Jeffreys had condemned her to be burnt, but her sentence, at her own request, was commuted by the King, and this amiable and excellent lady perished on the block.

The other sufferer was Elizabeth Gaunt, a person in humble circumstances, and a member of a Baptist church. She was charged with an offence similar to that of Mrs. Lisle—the harbouring a person named Burton, suspected of being concerned in the Rye-house conspiracy. He was a Nonconformist by profession, but in reality a worthless villain, as was abundantly proved by his becoming king's evidence against the woman who, to save his life, had jeopardized her own. It was not proved that she knew he was concerned in the conspiracy, or was aware of his name being in any proclamation; but want of evidence on a trial was a very small matter in those days, and this poor woman, without being permitted to call witnesses in her defence, was, at the bidding of her judge, found guilty. The miserable favour which had been shown to the noble sufferer was denied to this humble person, and she was left to endure the agony of the stake. Gather-

ing round her the materials of torture, that, when the flame was kindled, she might expire the sooner, she said, "Charity was a part of her religion, as well as faith. This, at worst, was the feeding of an enemy; so she hoped she had her reward with Him for whose sake she did this service, how unworthy soever the person was that made so ill a return for it. She rejoiced that God had suffered her to be the first to suffer by fire in this reign, and that her suffering was a martyrdom for that religion which was all love."*

"Thus," says Sir James Mackintosh, "was this poor and uninstructed woman supported under a death of cruel torture by the lofty consciousness of suffering for righteousness, and by that stedfast faith in the final triumph of justice, which can never visit the last moments of the oppressor."†

There have been many martyrs for religious faith, but these women were martyrs for religious charity, and their meek heroism in the hour of death was worthy of the cause for which they suffered. Such examples illustrate the power of endurance with which the Almighty has inspired the heart of woman, and which shines with such calm intensity when kindled and roused by religious zeal. Strong in the midst of apparent feebleness, she bears up under trials enough to crush minds of the hardest texture; thus resembling those beautiful primroses which flower on the rocky mountains of America,—

* Burnet, History of his Own Times, vol. i. p. 649.

† Dr. Vaughan gives a full and fair account of these trials in his History of England, pp. 856—865.

"Leaning their cheeks against the thick-ribbed ice,
And looking up with brilliant eyes to Ilm
Who bids them bloom, unblanched, amid the waste
Of desolation."

The storm of religious persecution in the reign of James II., which for two years raged with pitiless fury, was the last of the kind in this country, and probably the worst; like the outburst of Diocletian's violence, which closed the series of primitive persecutions by the Roman emperors. Taken in connexion with what occurred in the reign of Charles II., making about twenty years of persecution altogether, it presents an amount of suffering greater, perhaps, than had been endured in the same space of time since the commencement of the Reformation. Jeremy White, we are informed, collected a list of Dissenting sufferers, containing the names of sixty thousand persons, five thousand of whom died in prison.* That the cause of Nonconformity should endure such an ordeal is a proof of its vitality and strength; and we may accommodate to this passage in our history the exclamation of Sulpicius Severus, when reviewing the sufferings of the Christians under the reign of Diocletian: "Never did we achieve a more glorious victory than when we could not be subdued by so many years of slaughter."† The historian of the Puritans records the fact that the numbers of the Nonconformists did not decrease, though the engines of intolerance were so long and so assiduously worked against them; and this circumstance he attributes to their firmness of character—their plain,

* Neal, vol. iv. p. 554.

† Sulp. Severus, Hist. lib. ii. c. 47. His words referring to the length of Diocletian's persecution are "decem annorum."

practical, and awakening ministry—the severity of their morals—their strict observance of the Sabbath—their care for family religion—a succession of able and learned ministers among them—the disgust excited by the persecuting zeal of their adversaries—and, finally, the reaction produced by pushing High Church principles to an unbearable extreme.

The storm had now spent its fury, and a fairer sky began to shine on the harassed successors of the Puritans. James II., intent on his favourite object, the elevation, if not the exclusive establishment of the Papal Church in England, changed his tactics. He had roused the indignation of the Protestant Episcopal party by his Popish designs; and now, with a view in some measure to counteract their enmity, he thought it prudent to conciliate the Protestant Dissenters.* With these designs the Nonconformists were released from oppression, and even caressed. It was permitted them to re-open their places of worship, and assemble in peace; while as citizens they were no longer disabled from serving in offices of profit and trust. Certainly, to those who do not carefully notice the motives which seem to have influenced him, the proceedings of our Roman Catholic monarch appear very strange: and, by the way, a remarkable comparison between the histories of England and France is suggested at this period. A line of Protestant sovereigns on the English throne had been persecuting Papists and Puritans, and now a Popish prince was extending toleration to the Protestant Dissenter. Elizabeth of England had been the supporter of ecclesiastical despotism, when Henry IV.

* Hallam's Constitutional History of England, vol. ii. p. 230.

of France, by the Edict of Nantz, had proclaimed himself a patron of religious liberty; whereas now, while Louis IV. was dragooning his Protestant subjects out of the kingdom, James II. was declaring for liberty of conscience. The tables were completely turned, and the relative positions of the rulers of the two greatest countries of the earth oddly reversed.

The Dissenters availed themselves of the liberty to renew their worship in public. Turning to the Yarmouth Church-Book, I find the following entry on the 30th March, 1687:—"Ordered by the Church, that the meeting-house should be made clean, and shutters be made for the upper windows, which was accordingly done by many of our maid-servants." That curious minute gives us a glimpse of busy scenes of religious zeal in many a town and village. The humble conventicle repaired,—the interior cleansed, and fitted up for the Sunday gathering,—and thousands of hearts made glad by signs which promised that once more they should "sit under their vine and fig-tree, none daring to make them afraid." "On the 10th April," adds my authority, "Mr. James Hannot preached both parts of the day, when was a great auditory; for these were permitted by the King to meet, by a declaration from him, dated April 4th."* It appears that Mr. Hannot, who was invited to be the pastor, and at length accepted the invitation, was deputed to wait upon the King at Windsor with an address, which was well accepted. Addresses of thanks to his Majesty were presented by the various denominations of Non-conformists; some, in terms of flattery and submission,

* See Note [28].

which the more eminent ministers disapproved; and others, sufficiently laudatory, yet expressing nothing more than gratitude for his Majesty's indulgence.* It was a great matter with the Court party to secure addresses from the Dissenters, and means were industriously used for the purpose; but the number presented altogether by Nonconformists did not amount to more than seventy-seven, out of the hundred and eighty addresses from various civil and ecclesiastical bodies.†

Though the Dissenters generally accepted the indulgence, they were jealous of the King's proceedings. They saw through his designs, and rejoiced with trembling. "Thankful, as they were, for their liberty," says Lord Halifax, "they were fearful for the issue; neither can any member of consideration among them be charged with hazarding the public safety, by falling in with the measures of the Court, of which they had as great a dread as their neighbours." They were as much opposed to the principle of the King's power of dispensing with the laws as they ever were, deeming it fatal to the constitution of the country; and many of them, through their terror of Popery, were even averse to the repeal of the Test Act, choosing rather to suffer exclusion from civil offices than open the door for the admission of Papists. Some, who were advocates for occasional conformity with the Church of England, (that is, communicating now and then with their Episcopal brethren at the Lord's table, on the principle of promoting Christian unity,) suffered no personal inconvenience from the Test Act, and therefore advo-

* Neal, vol. iv. p. 569.

† Vaughan, Hist. Eng. p. 890.

cated its continuance. Among these were Sir John Shorter, the Presbyterian Lord Mayor of London, in the year 1687, who preferred occasionally attending the Church of England during his mayoralty, to availing himself of the indulgence proclaimed by James. Without impugning the motives of such persons, there was an apparent inconsistency in their conduct; and, certainly, if they confined their occasional conformity to their year of office, which, however, in some cases, we know was not the fact, they laid themselves open to the suspicion of a temporary sacrifice of principle. The Nonconformists, at this time, were placed in a situation of great perplexity: here were privileges offered, to which they had a perfect right, yet offered through a medium, and under circumstances, which alarmed them for the consequences. However the wisdom of their proceedings in some instances may be called in question, their deep-seated attachment to the cause of civil and religious liberty is beyond a doubt. A remarkable example of the perplexity just mentioned is given in the manuscript history of the Suffolk Churches. Among the particulars relative to his own Church at Wattisfield, Mr. Harmer notices the piety, zeal, and essential services of Mr. Baker, a gentleman of opulence, who resided at Wattisfield Hall, and was a member of the Independent Church. "An affair happened," he says, "in the year 1688, relating to civil government, which gave Mr. Baker extreme uneasiness, in which, without doubt, his friends here must have considered themselves a little concerned. The state of affairs occasioning King James to propose calling a Parliament, the Dissenters of Bury St. Edmunds

proposed choosing Mr. Baker one of the representatives of that town, in which the Mayor (the town was at that time governed by a mayor), who was a Papist, and Lord Dover, who had at that time a great influence at Bury, and was a great courtier, readily concurred. This would have been extremely entangling to Mr. Baker, and might have brought on many reproaches perhaps from both parties. But that Parliament never sat, and Infinite Wisdom freed the Dissenters from the difficulty.*

The affairs of James II. were now approaching a crisis. He had quarrelled with the Church and with both Universities. His designs in favour of Popery were manifest. His indulgences were obviously but a cover for the prosecution of those designs. The Clergy refused to read the declarations. The seven Bishops resisted the King's assumed prerogative, and were committed to the Tower. Lord Sunderland, the King's chief minister, avowed himself a convert to Popery. The birth of a Prince of Wales threatened a Popish succession. Affairs were now ripe for the interference of the Prince of Orange. Sailing from Holland, with a fleet of vessels twenty miles in extent, he passed the Straits of Dover, while multitudes lined the opposite shores of France and England, to look, with different feelings, on the proud armament which was to decide the fate of the British empire, now trembling in the balance.† On the 5th of November, 1688, the Prince landed at Torbay, to ascend the

* See Note [29].

† Rapin, History of England, vol. iii. p. 285. He says, "For my part, who was on board the fleet, I own it struck me extremely."

English throne; and among the early consequences of that great revolution was the passing of the Act of Toleration, which, though it granted but imperfect liberties to the Nonconformist, stayed the furious hand of persecution, that had so often smitten the peace, the property, and the lives of the noble-hearted Puritans.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE THREE DEATH-BEDS.

“That strain again,—it had a dying fall;
Oh! it came o’er my ear like the sweet south
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour.”

SHAKESPEARE.

OWEN, Baxter, Howe, were “three mighty men,” like David’s “three,” mighty among a host of heroes. Gifted with uncommon natural endowments, they were rendered still more distinguished by the eminent piety which Divine grace inspired and nourished in their souls. They were specimens of humanity such as the Father of Spirits occasionally furnishes to the world, to inspire us with reverence for our common nature, by showing us what his noble creature man may be. “One star differeth from another star in glory;” and in like manner, these three great moral luminaries shone with varied lustre. Not more diversified were their faces than their mental idiosyncracies. Owen’s grave and majestic countenance was the image of his profound and noble mind. Baxter’s prominent and manly features, with his dark piercing eyes, betokened

his robust, vigorous, and acute intellect; while Howe's face, which shone as it had been the face of an angel, with blended dignity and beauty, was the index of his harmonious soul. Owen was a pattern of self-control; Baxter was apt to be hurried on by the impetuosity of his feelings; but Howe had a sweetness of disposition and temper which it was at once his duty to maintain and his delight to indulge. Of what this world generally calls prudence, Baxter had none; of that wisdom in intercourse with other men which exclusively deserves the name of prudence, Baxter had but little: of the latter, however, Owen had a goodly share; while Howe most sedulously cultivated this useful quality, accounting it to hold no mean place among the virtues. The piety of Owen has been characterized by his biographer as profoundly *spiritual*, such as he himself portrayed in his matchless work on "*Spiritual Mindedness*;" that of Baxter has been pronounced by the same authority as of an *unearthly* order; but the writer of John Howe's life has spoken of his hero as distinguished by a piety which presided alike over every faculty, and permitted *none of them to break the ranks*.* The genius of Owen's character was like a deep broad stream, rolling onwards laden with many a rich argosy. Baxter's was like a majestic cataract—the great Niagara, pouring down unceasingly its foaming waters; while that of Howe was like a widely-expanded lake, reflecting from its untroubled surface the light and glory of heaven. Regarding them as writers and preachers, perhaps the dogmatic form of Christianity was most prominent in

* See Lives of Owen and Baxter, by Orme; and Life of Howe, by Rogers.

Owen, the practical in Baxter, and the contemplative in Howe. The first was a great scholar; the second, a great casuist; the third, a great philosopher. Owen worked in the deep mine of the word of God, and plied his learned skill and strength in fetching out the rich treasures embedded there. Baxter applied the ore so gained to practical uses; while the peculiar genius of Howe fitted him to do both, and, in addition, to mould truth into the most beautiful forms of thought, and to place them in relations of exquisite harmony.

But the points of resemblance in these remarkable persons were more numerous and strong than the points of difference. Each one stood chief in the order of mind to which he belonged. Each was a prince in his own realm. All three were *men*, "veritable men," masculine in mind and soul, sincere and earnest, without the slightest tinge of affectation. They never strove to appear what they were not: their striving was to be and do what their great Master told them. This world was to them no theatre for display; this life no fictitious drama, merely to be acted with propriety; but a scene for truly heroic deeds—an existence to be spent in working out grand spiritual results for themselves and the human race, preparatory to a nobler career hereafter. They were indifferent in their teaching to outward forms, to the proprieties of style, and to the graces of rhetoric. As authors they came forth in negligent attire, (though it was far from habitually ungraceful,) and were intent on the substance rather than the mode—on things rather than words. As preachers, all three were absorbed in a common object,—“if by any means they might save

some;" and upon their earnest, faithful, and affectionate ministry, the Spirit of God set his seal, by rendering it eminently successful. Each had a catholic soul, free from sectarian narrowness and rancour. They mourned and wept over the Church's divisions, and prayed and longed for the days when throughout Zion's borders there would be unbroken peace and unaffected love. Conscience was not the guide of one of these heroes more than another. Their sufferings for conscience sake, their lives as Puritan confessors, attest their common loyalty to that sacred and supreme rule of action. And, finally, it might be said of all the three, they were "in labours more abundant." Their decision of character was expressed in untiring action for the good of men. "It was the calmness of an intensity kept uniform by the nature of the human mind forbidding it to be more, and by the character of the individual forbidding it to be less."*

Whatever obloquy might once attach to their names, it is now well-nigh dissipated,—and their fair fame shines forth with a brightness which excites far and wide the admiration of the Church and the world. In them has been fulfilled the saying,—“Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.” The men whom God so greatly loved are now honourable in the sight of their fellow-men. Time at length is sure to pay the meed of honour to the truly illustrious.

We have had, in the course of this volume, some glimpses of these great and good men, and witnessed their activity, sufferings, and patience amidst the scenes

* John Foster.

of their more public life. It is the design of the present chapter to follow them into retirement, and to contemplate the manner in which they closed their days. The story of their death-beds bears witness to the value of their principles. The faith by which they lived was a faith by which they were not afraid to die. It is true, men without any faith have died in peace. The last hours of Hume, the prince of sceptics, have been often cited by the friends of scepticism as a proof of what philosophy can do without religion. But to die, believing nothing—to die, discrediting the doctrine of immortality—to die, treating all that has been said of the future world as a mere fable—to die, ridiculing the event, which, if it be indeed the termination of man's intellectual and moral being, must be to us the most solemn of events,—is to die “even as the fool dieth.” It displays as little of philosophy as of faith. But for a man, in the full belief of a future world, of its rewards and punishments, and of the true character of the Almighty, to die calmly and happily, with no other support than philosophy can yield, would be something to the purpose: such a death, however, was never heard of yet. It is only the Christian, who properly believes in futurity, who is fully aware of the solemn grandeur of eternity, who is truly acquainted with the character of the Author of his being; and therefore his final hour alone can adequately test the strength of his principles. Our Puritan heroes looked into eternity; stood on the edge of life, and gazed on the infinite future; saw more than most of us can see—yet trembled not; but with a calm heroism, like that they had evinced through life, took the last step,

crossed the boundary line of the visible, and, having looked with an angel's smile on those they left behind, vanished. For wise purposes,—to teach his people lessons which may be of incalculable service in another world,—the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, may sometimes permit them to leave this world in darkness. Though He be closer to them than any other being ever was, their eyes may be holden so that they do not see Him: but the veiling of his presence is only for a while; and, oh! the rapture of the moment, when, having passed through the depths of the valley, He makes himself known to the once troubled, but now for ever peaceful and happy spirit, saying, "It is I; be not afraid." But such instances are exceptions to the general rule. "Mark the perfect, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." The three characters whom we have now before us died confirming that great law.

Persons generally love to visit the birthplace of the illustrious. What troops of pilgrims resort to certain spots, where some master spirit of our world first saw the light of day, and wept, and smiled! It is natural to do so. We heartily sympathize in the feeling, and have experienced its rich gratification. But some may think that the death-places of great men are spots more ennobled. To stand within some time-worn chamber, and to reflect,—Here did that mighty, thoughtful, earnest, glorious mind leave the house of its pilgrimage, to enter its eternal mansion. Here did prospects, such as earth saw never, break on his ravished view. Here did his spirit fling off its trammels, and rise to freedom. Here he was born again, not into a weeping and dying

life, but into one that knows no tears—no death. Here, not in infant's weakness and ignorance, but in manhood's intelligence and strength, he began to live, conscious at the moment of the change, and even reflecting on it. Here he began to be immortal! Such associations are certainly of the very noblest kind. We wish the rooms where John Owen, Richard Baxter, and John Howe departed from our world were still in existence and could be identified;—they would be holy shrines, worthy of being visited by crowds of reverential pilgrims.

It was in some house in the little quiet village of Ealing that the great John Owen closed his earthly days. I have inquired if any traditions respecting the precise place remain, but can find none. He had some property there, and a house of his own; and in the peaceful seclusion of such a residence he wrote, not long before his death, his memorable work on "The Glory of Christ." It shows that his state of mind was of the most enviable description; that (to adopt an allusion to the writings of Bunyan, whom he highly revered, and for whose singular talents of usefulness this first biblical critic of his age said he was ready to give all his learning,) he had reached the land of Beulah, was reclining on the banks of the river of life, and could walk and talk with the shining ones. Grainger refers to this beautiful work by Owen, and says, "There are some very peculiar expressions in his writings. Solomon's Song could not furnish him with a sufficient number of phrases to express his love of Christ, but he must invent a jargon of his own." Poor Grainger! if he had ever read the work he criti-

cised, his language showed how little he knew of that Divine affection which throbbed in Owen's heart almost to bursting. No wonder that the rapturous expression of a great and sanctified soul, as it stands by the half-opened gate of immortality and looks upon the glory of Christ, appears "jargon" to the ears of many. But Owen "knew whom he had believed," and, with a faith as intelligent as it was fervent, rejoiced in the unseen object of his love. Transported by his Divine theme, he spoke with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," spreading out his sublime reflections like "a sea of glass mingled with fire." The last utterances of his heart in friendship were in unison with the sentiments he expressed in his final work. "I am going," says he to his dear friend, Charles Fleetwood, "I am going to Him whom my soul has loved, or rather, who has loved me with an everlasting love, which is the whole ground of all my consolation. I am leaving the ship of the Church in a storm; but while the great Pilot is in it, the loss of a poor under-rower will be inconsiderable. Live, and pray, and hope, and wait patiently, and do not despond: the promise stands invincible, that He will never leave us nor forsake us." The first sheet of his book had passed through the press under the superintendence of Mr. Payne, an eminent Dissenting minister at Saffron Walden; and as that excellent person informed him of the circumstance, the dying saint exclaimed, "I am glad to hear it. But, oh! brother Payne, the long-wished-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing in this world." Owen was a man of robust constitution, and

fearful was the conflict between his complicated maladies and his remaining strength. It was a stern struggle, as it often is in such cases, ere "the keepers of the house bowed themselves;" and the attendants stood round the bed with mingled emotions, gazing on a spectacle of intense physical agony, combined with a state of mind "calm and unruffled as a summer sea when not a breath of wind blows o'er its surface." In silence, with uplifted eyes and hands, John Owen left the world. It was on Bartholomew's day, so memorable in Puritan history and in his own; and the imagination delights to follow him to regions of liberty and peace, where he joined many of that confessor band who had taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and had now found in heaven a better and more enduring substance. Eleven days afterwards, a long procession of carriages, to the number of sixty-seven, belonging to the rich and noble, together with mourning-coaches and numbers of persons on horseback, moved slowly and silently along the streets of London, conveying the mortal remains of Owen to Bunhill-fields, the Puritan *Necropolis*.

Baxter survived him eight years. In a house, near his friend Sylvester, in Charter-house-square, he spent his last days; and there did this remarkable man, with regard to whom activity and existence were but convertible terms, labour to the end. When disabled from preaching in Sylvester's meeting-house, he preached in his own dwelling. He almost died in the pulpit the last time he occupied it. Such hazards were nought to him. "It would, doubtless," says his friend, "have been his joy to have been transfigured in

the Mount." No wonder!—because his unearthly soul was now so full of heaven. "Drawing near to the city," if I may quote Bunyan again, "he had yet a more perfect view thereof." He talked in the pulpit, Calamy tells us, "with great freedom about another world, like one who had been there, and was come, as a sort of express from thence, to make report concerning it." His pen, too—that busy pen—was employed as long as he could hold it in writing for the cause dear to his heart; and among his last works was his "Dying Thoughts," worthy of being bound up with Owen's "Meditations on the Glory of Christ." But at last his growing infirmities took him from his favourite employments, confining him first to his chamber, and then to his bed. But when his lips could no longer speak in public, and the pen of the ready writer had been for ever dropped, his vigorous mind "abode rational in faith and hope, arguing itself into, and preserving itself in patience and joy, through grace." Nor did he fail to converse with those who visited him on those subjects which through life had always had the first place in his thoughts. With unaffected humility, he spoke of himself as "the vilest dunghill worm," as "a sinner worthy of being condemned for the best duty he ever did,"—whose hopes were all from the free mercy of God in Christ. Reminded of the good which his works had produced, this indefatigable author replied, "I was but a pen in God's hands; and what praise is due to a pen?" His resigned submission to the will of God in his sharp sickness was eminent. When extremity of pain constrained him earnestly to pray to God for his release by death, he would check himself

—"It is not fit for me to prescribe; *when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt!*" Being in great anguish, he said, "Oh! how unsearchable are his ways, and his paths past finding out: the reaches of his providence we cannot fathom.—Do not think," he added to his friends, "the worse of religion for what you see me suffer." He had a well-grounded assurance of his eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within, only lamenting that he could not triumphantly express his feelings, owing to extreme pain. Still, he spoke delightfully of heaven, and, quoting the Apostle's description of the celestial assembly, remarked, that it deserved a thousand thousand thoughts. Words of wisdom and counsel were ever on his lips for those who visited him; and, with that large public-spiritedness which he displayed throughout his active life, he spent many of his last hours in praying for this miserable distracted world, and for the preservation of the Church in the midst of it. Pain was his constant companion, but with martyr-like firmness he endured all, exclaiming, "I have pain,—there is no arguing against sense; but I have peace—I have peace." His life had been a continued state of physical torture. His manifold diseases and sufferings were enough to excite pity in the hearts of the most inhuman of his enemies. Our sensibilities are positively tortured by the reading of his pathetic descriptions of himself. Welcome, then, must have been the prospect of his entering a world of which it is said, "Neither shall there be any more pain;" and how beautiful was the oft-quoted answer which he gave to the question, "How he did?"—"Almost well. Better than I deserve to be,

but not so well as I hope to be!" Sickness to him was convalescence, and death was immortal and healthful life. The world had been to him as an hospital, and his lot had been cast in the ward appropriated to extreme sufferers; but now his recovery was at hand, and he was bound for those salubrious regions where the air can never be tainted with disease, and the cry of pain is never heard. "On Monday," says his friend Sylvester, "about five in the evening, death sent his harbinger to summon him away. A great trembling and coldness extorted strong cries from him for pity and redress from Heaven, which cries and agonies continued for some time, till at length he ceased, and lay in patient expectation of his change." The storm was now over, and the tempest-tossed vessel was in still waters, waiting for admission to the harbour. The gentle cry in the ear of his housekeeper, "Death, death!" betokened the full consciousness of Baxter in his dying moments. But it was not in words to reveal the mysteries of that awful crisis. There is no syllable more common in human speech—there is nothing more utterly unknown than DEATH! He turned to thank a friend for visiting his dying bed, and, looking on him with an eye of love, exclaimed, "The Lord teach you how to die!" Truly the Lord had taught him the lesson; and through the record of his last hours, which the hand of friendship has carefully preserved, may the Lord teach the same to every reader! About four o'clock on the morning of the 8th December, 1691, Baxter had done for ever with the sorrows of this mortal state, and had entered on the saints' everlasting rest. His body sleeps in Christchurch,

beside the ashes of his wife and mother. Many vied in doing honour to the man whose memory they revered; and Conformists as well as Nonconformists carried him to his grave, and made great lamentations over him. Dr. Earl informed Mr. Palmer that he was present at Baxter's funeral, and that the train of coaches reached from Merchant Taylors' Hall—from whence the corpse was carried—to the place of burial.

John Howe was the last of this rare triumvirate, and was spared by Divine Providence to adorn the Church till the year 1705, when he shook off the sorrows of humanity for ever, and joined his elder brothers before the throne. In his latter days, he was eminently privileged with the joys of Christianity. His mind, singularly pure, elevated, and devout, even from his youth, seemed at this period to attain a more ethereal purity, to soar to a more sublime elevation, and to breathe a spirit of more seraphic devotion. It was the opinion of the ancients that the nearer men approach to the hour of death, the more divine become their souls, and the more piercing their insight into the mysteries of futurity.* Howe, under the influence of a diviner enthusiasm than ever touched the spirit of the Grecian sage or poet, certainly appeared sometimes, during the last year of his life, as if the veil of flesh had been already parted, and his free spirit had found a pathway which "the vulture's eye had never seen." It is related that on one occasion,

* 'Η δὲ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ τότε δῆπου θειοτάτῃ καταφαίνεται, καὶ τότε τὶ τῶν μελλόντων προορᾷ.—ΧΕΝΟΡΗΘ, *Cyrop.* lib. viii. cap. 7, § 21.

at the Lord's table, his soul was suffused with such joy, that the communicants thought his physical strength would have sunk under the load of such preternatural emotions. Another instance of overpowering rapture about the same time is recorded by himself, in a Latin note found on the blank leaf of his study Bible. After the record of a peculiarly beautiful and refreshing dream, which he had some years before, he adds,—“But what of the same kind I sensibly felt, through the admirable bounty of my God, and the most pleasant comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, on Oct. 22, 1704, far surpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart, tears gushing out of my eyes, for joy that God should shed abroad his love abundantly through the hearts of men, and that, for this very purpose, mine own should be so signally possessed of, and by his blessed Spirit.” One trembles at criticising such a phenomenon in the life of such a man, and attempting to resolve it all into a mere delirium of excitement. Oh! who that has ever mused on the mystery of the human mind, and on the mystery of that unseen world which presses close around it, on the piety of such a man as Howe, and on the special love which God bears to those whom he has distinguished by a close resemblance to himself, would dare to speak lightly of such a sacred fact? I would ask with his biographer, “Who shall say with what special tokens of benignant regard the Supreme Being might think fit to refresh the spirit of his long-tried and faithful servant, on the eve of the last fearful conflict? or with what prelibations of heaven his

gracious Master might condescend to honour his fidelity and obedience?"*

Like his two great predecessors, Howe spent some of his closing days in the composition of a work expressive of his own rich religious experience. — ("Patience in Expectation of Future Blessedness," was its remarkable title; and it shows that so glorious were his thoughts of heaven, and so intense his desire to depart, that he had to practise an unwonted form of self-denial to remain willingly in a world, which, alas! so many of us are loth to leave.

During Howe's illness he received the visits of his friends, and was attended with delicate care and affection by his devoted wife. His wish expressed in a sermon, preached on the death of Mrs. Esther Sampson, was fulfilled to the letter,—"In short, it were desirable (if God see good) to die amidst the pleasant friends and relatives who were not ill-pleased that we lived; that living and dying breath might mingle, and ascend together in prayers and praises to the blessed Lord of heaven and earth—the God of ourselves: if then we could but part with consent, a rational and joyful consent. Otherwise, to die among fashionable bemoanings and lamentations, as if we despaired of futurity, one would say (with humble submission to the Divine pleasure), 'Lord, let me rather die alone—in perfect solitude—in some unfrequented wood, or on the top of some far remote mountain, where none might interrupt the solemn transactions between thy glorious blessed self, and my joyfully-departing, self-resigning soul.' But in all this," he beautifully adds,

* Rogers's Life of Howe.

“we must refer ourselves to God’s holy pleasure, who will dispose of us, living and dying, in the best, the wisest, and the kindest way.”

Howe’s friends communed with him to the last, aiding rather than disturbing his holy contemplations. One can see his majestic countenance, and his calm bright eye, as Death’s finger touches him, lying upon his couch in that wainscoted apartment of the beginning of the last century. The door opens, and there comes one to visit him, whose history has been marked with strange events—the son of the only man who ever sat on England’s throne without a crown—born when his father was a country gentleman, and brought up with no ambitious expectations; then raised to occupy for a while his noble father’s chair of state,—and then led down unheeded into the paths of private life. ’Tis Richard Cromwell. Howe had been his chaplain, and they cherished for each other a mutual regard. The divine had seen him amidst the splendour of a court and the scenes of adversity, and had witnessed in both conditions the display of virtues which commanded his admiration. He spoke of him always in the highest terms. This interview between the ex-Protector and his late chaplain is one of the many interviews which history tells us of—the minute details, the accurate report of which curiosity would fain recover from the shades of oblivion.* But the words they uttered have for ever died away, save that an indistinct but sweet echo of them still lasts in a brief sentence of Dr. Calamy’s:—“There was a great deal of serious discourse between them; tears were freely

* See Note [30].

shed on both sides; and the parting was very solemn, as I have been informed by one who was present on the occasion." One or two of the dying utterances of this great man are distinctly preserved, and are what we might expect from one so greatly good.

As a proof that he needed patience of the unusual kind he describes in his last book, he said once to his wife, "Though he thought he loved her as well as it was fit for one creature to love another, yet, if it were put to his choice whether to die that moment or to live that night, and the living that night would secure the continuance of his life for seven years to come, he would choose to die that moment." And in the same spirit, he remarked to an attendant one morning, after being relieved from the intense sufferings of the previous night, "He was *for feeling* that he was alive, though most willing to die, and lay the clog of mortality aside." When his son, a physician, was lancing his leg, to diminish his sufferings, Howe inquired what he was doing, and observed, "I am not afraid of dying, but I am afraid of pain." He had a peculiar sensitiveness with regard to physical pain, which seems to have been constitutional. But his pains soon afterwards terminated for ever; and on April the 2nd, 1705, his spirit entered those regions of ineffable repose and joy after which he had so long and fervently aspired.

Thus, one by one, did these three worthies cross the ever-flowing stream,* to meet on those banks of unfading greenness which border it on the celestial side.

* ————— "Ille
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum."—HORACE.

United together in undying fellowship, all misunderstandings between Owen and Baxter have for ever ceased; while the spirit of Howe continues its loving intercourse with both. Freed from the infirmities of this mortal condition, their pure and noble natures have attained to the perfection alike of sanctity and friendship. And it is among the best exercises and richest pleasures of pious minds, in reading the history of the great and good, to form an acquaintance with their characters through this medium, *as a preparation* for that intimate fellowship with them hereafter, which Christianity encourages us to anticipate.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE THREE GRAVES.*

"He freed the funeral stone from the moss which covered it; he renewed the half-effaced inscription, where the pious friends of the dead had expressed in scriptural style the celestial joys which awaited him."

Old Mortality.

ABOUT four miles north-west from Cambridge lies the village of Oakington. It has a church dedicated to St. Andrew, whose aisles have been trodden by the feet of many generations. Round it spreads the old churchyard, with its grassy hillocks, beneath which,

"Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep."

Bordering that churchyard is another place of sepulture, which was never touched by any prelatical rites of consecration. Its only sacredness arises from its religious associations, and from the precious dust which sleeps under its greensward. Three tombs still remain side by side within that little enclosure, worthy of the visits of those who cherish the memory of Puritan heroes. The men who are slumbering there until the resurrection of the just are little known to fame, save

* See Frontispiece.

that which speaks within the circles of Nonconformity, —fame, whose voice is rarely heard and little heeded by the world at large.

“The tombs,” says Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, “were covered with nettles and elder-bushes, and the inscriptions illegible, till they were cleared away, and the tombs cleaned, in the beginning of 1774. The fences were gone, and a neighbouring cottager then took it into his own garden.” Since then those humble monuments have been preserved, and the reader is invited to pause over the three graves and read the inscriptions.

<p>Here Lyeth the Body of M^r Henry Osland, Minister of the Gospil, who, after 17 Years faithfull Dispensa- tion of the same in y^e Church gathred at Willingham & Cottenham, ended this life Nouember y^e 19th Anno Dom. 1711, in y^e 43 year of his Age.</p>	<p>Hear Lyeth bvyred the Body of M^r Joseph Oddey, Minister of the Gospell, desesed the Third of May, 1687.</p> <p>Mark the perfect man, and behovld the vpright; for the end of that man is peace.</p>	<p>Here Lyeth the Body of M^r Francis Holcroft, Minister of the Gospil, who died January 6th: 1692, and in the 50 ninth yeare of his Age. Danie 12th V: 3^d And they that be wise shall shine as the brightnes of the firmement, and they that tvrne many to righteovs- nes as the stares for ever and ever.</p>
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I know nothing respecting Mr. Osland, but that he was the pastor of the church at Cottenham and Willingham; but some very interesting particulars respecting the two other ministers have been preserved, and will supply materials for the present chapter.*

* My authorities are Robinson, Calamy, Palmer, and local traditions.

Francis Holcroft was the son of a knight who resided at Westham, in the neighbourhood of London. When he had reached a proper age, his father sent him, together with his brother Henry, to the University of Cambridge. It must have been about the time that this ancient seat of learning was recovering itself from the confusion of the civil wars, and settling down, like its sister at Oxford, under the newly-established Puritan regimen. Many of its members, because of their disaffection towards the Government, had been ejected from their offices, and among them, no doubt, there were men of learning and piety; but they were replaced by others who were their equals, some their superiors. Cudworth and Lightfoot, not to mention others of less extensive fame in the world of letters, were of the number. Holcroft was entered student of Clare Hall, which had been then lately rebuilt by the liberality of several benefactors. Dr. Cudworth was Master of the college; and the learned David Clarkson, who afterwards married Holcroft's sister, was one of the Fellows, and tutor to the young undergraduate: between them, it is said, "there subsisted great endearments." Tillotson was his chamber and bed fellow; and as we picture to ourselves the two youths, in the enjoyment of an intimate and endeared friendship, pacing the halls of Clare, or rambling on the banks of the Cam, and then follow them through their subsequent career—the one a persecuted Non-conformist, the other Archbishop of Canterbury,—we have a striking example of the far divergent paths which open before college associates when they leave the gates of their Alma Mater,—contrasts most

strongly marked in the days to which this work relates.*

It would appear as if Holcroft had been educated in High Church principles under his father's roof; for it is stated that it was in Clare Hall that he adopted his Puritanical principles, probably owing to the instructions of his worthy tutor. Approving of Nonconformist discipline, he became a communicant with the Rev. Mr. Jephcot of Swaffham Prior, eleven miles from Cambridge. Young Holcroft's chamber was over the college gate; and as he sat there by his window on Sunday morning, he often observed a horse waiting to convey one of the Fellows to the village of Littlington, about thirteen miles from Cambridge. Not unfrequently, after waiting some time, the horse was led away without its rider;—the man was intemperate; he had not recovered from the last night's debauch, and therefore the congregation in the church at Littlington must fare as they can. Francis Holcroft was touched with compassion for these poor people, who were indeed as sheep without a shepherd; and not being able to endure the thought of their being thus neglected, while he was doing nothing on the Lord's day, he resolved to offer himself to supply the parish. The services of the young preacher were gladly accepted; and many a time did he ride over to Littlington, to instruct and edify the people of the village. He received an ample reward for his labours in the success which crowned them.

About the year 1655, Holcroft accepted the living

* It is pleasing to remember that Tillotson befriended Holcroft when he was persecuted by the ruling powers.

of Bassingbourne. There he became extremely popular, and preached on Sundays and holidays to very crowded congregations. Not content with the impression produced by his preaching, he was anxious to establish purity of discipline and promote Christian fellowship among those to whom his ministry had been useful; and therefore he formed a Church in the parish upon those principles of Congregational polity which some time before he had espoused. Several gownsmen and inhabitants of Cambridge became members of this Christian community. It was a solemn service when this Church was formed. While the little group stood up, the following Covenant was read:—

“We do, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the awful crowned King of Zion, and in the presence of his holy angels and people, and all beside here present, solemnly give up ourselves to the Lord and to one another by the will of God; solemnly promising and engaging in the aforesaid presence to walk with the Lord, and with one another, in the observation of all godly ordinances, and the discharge of all relative duties in this Church of God and elsewhere, as the Lord shall enlighten and enable us.”

The members then proceeded to sign it. After the Church had been thus constituted, and other persons were proposed as candidates for membership, a like simple and touching ceremonial was performed. “Brother,” said Holcroft, turning to the individual, “if you now, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the awful crowned King of Zion, do solemnly give up yourself to him, signify it by lifting up your right hand to the Lord.” Then he would add, in the name of the

Church, lifting up his own right hand, "We likewise, in the aforesaid awful presence, do receive you into our communion, solemnly promising and engaging to carry it towards you as becomes a Church of Christ, watching over you in the Lord as he shall enable us, and in testimony thereof do give you the right hand of fellowship."

Knit together in love, the Church at Bassingbourne continued through the Commonwealth to enjoy the much-valued services of Holcroft. Gladly did the people flock from miles around to hear their favourite preacher, and on the Sabbath evening they returned musing on what they had heard.

But soon the Restoration came; and all was changed. Holcroft was ejected and his flock dispersed. Still he regarded himself as their shepherd, and resolved to "seek out his sheep in the places where they had been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." He met them where he could. Some joined him at one Mr. Thurlow's house, in Cambridge. Another band assembled at Barrington; another at Clopton; others at Eversden, Guyhorn, and Waterbeach. It was more than his strength allowed to continue the oversight of so many persons in different places, and it was therefore resolved that four members of the Church should be chosen to assist him. Joseph Oddy, who now lies side by side with him in the little graveyard at Oakington, was one of the four. He had been Fellow of Trinity, but was ejected at the Restoration. The companion of Holcroft in brighter days, he claved to him in his adversity; and prizing the principles of Congregational Church government, and being devoted to his work as

a Christian minister, he accepted the hazardous office of assistant to his friend.

Oddy was scarcely inferior to Holcroft in popularity as a preacher. Over the dreary country of the fens he often travelled, preaching to the people in the open air. So esteemed were his instructions that some persons went twenty miles to hear him. Of course this popularity greatly provoked his persecutors, and both he and his colleague were imprisoned in Cambridge Castle, with two Elders who had shared in their toils. Holcroft was indicted at the assizes, and was sentenced to leave the realm in three months, or suffer death as a felon. But he had a friend at Court in the Earl of Anglesea, who represented his case to the King, and obtained a reprieve; but notwithstanding this he remained a prisoner in the castle about nine years. Upon the Proclamation of Indulgence in 1672 he had his liberty, but not long afterwards was seized and imprisoned again for three years.

Mr. Oddy was released after an imprisonment of five years; but, like his companion, he was again apprehended and confined. It is related, that, when preaching one night in a wood, between Willingham and Cottenham, as he was sitting on his horse, that he might more readily escape from his enemies, they assailed him with such abruptness and violence as to throw him on the ground, so that he became insensible from the fall. In this state he was laid across the horse's back by his merciless persecutors, and in this mournful plight conveyed to Cambridge Castle.

Mr. Oddy was a wit as well as a divine, and a proof of this occurs in connexion with the story of his

release from prison. It is a common thing to regard the Puritans as a set of moping fanatics, thinking it a sin to smile; but this notion is the result of prejudice—not of an impartial study of their history. Indeed, the pious elevation and habitual dignity of these men did not allow of their descending to the vulgar buffoonery of courtly jesters and cavaliers; nor were their afflictive circumstances at all favourable to the sallies of cheerful humour: yet did the latter sometimes playfully gleam in their conversations, and exhilarate their more melancholy companions, like sunlight falling on a sombre landscape. Their wit was often called forth by the abusive language of their High Church persecutors; and then, occasionally, it proved severe and cutting, as in the following instance. A Cambridge man addressed Mr. Oddy, soon after his release from prison, with the insulting lines:—

“ Good day, Mr. Oddy;
Pray, how fares your body?—
Methinks you look damnably thin.”

To which the Puritan quietly replied,—

“ That, Sir, 's your mistake;
'Tis for righteousness' sake;—
Damnation 's the fruit of your sin! ”

The confinement of such men as Holcroft and Oddy was not always very strict,—much depended on the gaoler; and sometimes, when he chanced to be a kind-hearted man, and, perhaps, a little touched with Puritan sympathies, he would allow his captive secretly to leave his cell for a little while, upon promising to return at an appointed hour. So the gaoler at Bedford,

as is well known, treated Bunyan; and so the keeper of Cambridge Castle treated Holcroft. The congregations he had formed still continued to meet for worship, and spent their time in fasting, reading the Scriptures, and prayer; and sometimes, under cover of the night, through the connivance of the gaoler, Holcroft clandestinely visited his endeared flocks.

At Eversden there still stands a plain old manor-house, moated round, and approached by an ancient little bridge. At the time of which I am speaking, it was inhabited by a gentleman of wealth and influence, a member of Holcroft's Church, and an attached friend. Village tradition relates that a vehicle might often be seen crossing that old bridge in the evening, on its way to Cambridge, to bring back Holcroft, who was to preach at midnight in Eversden Wood, which skirted the back of the manor-house. Till within a few years, there also remained in the midst of the wood, serving as a shelter for the confessor in bonds, a fine old oak, known through all the neighbourhood as the pulpit-tree. The manorial houses and manorial trees of Great Britain are among the most interesting of our national relics. They possess a mystic meaning, unlocked by traditionary associations, as by the key of a hierophant; and surely, among such objects, the old tree, now hewn down, and the manor-house still standing at Eversden, deserve to be classed. There was once the Gospel Beech in the wolds of Gloucestershire; and there is still the Gospel Oak at Stonely, near Wolverhampton, "favourable," as Strutt says, "to thought and devotion—to the reveries of the philosopher on ages past, and the contemplation of the Christian on

the ages to come." Holcroft's pulpit-tree may be added to these; and the thought of it, with its more distinct legend, and more hallowed associations, will possess, I doubt not, the mind of many a reader as the image of a sort of Christian Dodona, beneath whose branches there used to sound the voice of an oracle, more wise and true than Greece, in the olden time, had ever heard.

Holcroft was ever intent on the welfare of his flock; and when he could not reach them with his voice, he addressed them by his pen, and despatched his pastoral letters round the circuit of his truly primitive diocese. One of these epistles he afterwards published, under the title of "A Word to the Saints from the Watch Tower." When the time of his release came, he returned to his public duties with renewed vigour, and, re-associating with his former colleague, Mr. Oddy, preached in Cambridge, in spite of the interruptions of the gownsmen, who would assemble at the place of the Nonconformists' meeting, and beat a drum to disturb their worship. All round the country, too, did these earnest evangelists persevere in their efforts, followed sometimes by such crowds of people, that they were compelled to preach to them in the open air. For some time a union existed among all the brethren in the different parts of Cambridgeshire who had been gathered into fellowship by Holcroft's labours, and, in common, they looked up to him as their bishop. There were embraced among them both Pædobaptists and Antipædobaptists: the terms of communion were Christian and catholic; and the Church maintained "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." At

the same time, though scattered over the country, the members formed but one Church, quite independent of other Churches, and maintaining Congregational order and discipline.*

But circumstances at length occurred which rendered it desirable, in the estimation of all, to alter the arrangement. Holcroft's health had been undermined by his imprisonments, and by his preaching in small places to crowded assemblies. Throwing off his coat, he would exert himself till he was much heated, and then passing, without due precaution, into the open air, took cold. With impaired health, and enfeebled nerves, he sunk into a state of profound melancholy, which incapacitated him for his loved employ. The different little parties in the country, whom his influence had held together, now lost that endeared bond of friendship; and this, in connexion with the inconvenience of the plan,—to say nothing of other objections, and the passing of the Act of Toleration,—induced them to form themselves into distinct Congregational Churches. Holcroft survived his colleague five years, but he continued to decline in health and spirits till the time of his death in 1692. Before his departure, however, the strength of his faith and the tranquillity of his mind were restored, and he died exclaiming, "For I know, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

This Puritan worthy was no common man: with great natural talents he united eminent literary attainments, and was especially renowned for his theological

* See Note [31].

learning and knowledge of the Scriptures. But as a preacher he seems to have been most celebrated. "His preaching was less methodical than that of his contemporaries, but then it was more useful. 'It appeared to me,' says Mr. Mildmay, in his funeral sermon, 'truly apostolical, primitive, and divine.' His words were sharp arrows in the people's hearts; they had a quick, penetrating power and efficacy,—so that his converts were very numerous. He was so indefatigable in his labours that he preached perpetually;—there is scarcely a village about Cambridge, but some old person can show you the barn where Holcroft preached. He had a lion-like courage, tempered with the most winning affability in his whole deportment: his doctrines were moderate Calvinism: he had a great zeal for Non-conformity, though a greater zeal for true piety, which he revered even in his enemies,—if, indeed, any such could be enemies to so good a man. During the twelve years of his imprisonment in Cambridge Castle, he was of the most cheerful disposition; and though in the latter part of his life his spirits failed, yet all his conversation was heavenly and useful." *

The names and deeds of the sleepers in the graveyard at Oakington are now wholly forgotten, save by a few. A contemplative son of the Puritans, however, will love to muse over those crumbling sepulchres, and to repeat the pious task of Old Mortality, "by freeing the funeral stone from the moss that covers it, and renewing the half-effaced inscription." In his travels over England, he will not fail to inquire after the

* Robinson's Historical Account, &c. Works, vol. v. p. 268.

shrine of his fathers, and with reverent step to pass the aisles of the church or the meeting-house, and the paths of the burial-place around it, where those shrines may be discovered, conscious that he is treading upon holy ground.* His thoughts and emotions will not be of the same order with those of the pilgrim to the shrine of poets, statesmen, and warriors: but if they be less exalting, they will be more pure; and if they lack the effect produced by the brilliant associations of worldly greatness and renown, they will be under that hallowed charm, which is excited by the recollection of characters of the highest moral excellence. If he find little in their names to fire him with the poetry of romance, he will find much to inspire him with the poetry of religion; and being preserved by his own piety from the temptation to worship as an idol his brother man, however great and good, his thoughts will be led upwards to God, the Father of Spirits, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

How much is lost of the history of our Puritan ancestors which we would fain recover! What stories of thrilling interest—of heroic characters—of wonderful interpositions—of adventure, suffering, and escape—of love and sorrow, fear and hope, care and joy, are buried in those graves! How difficult to form a true idea of Puritan men and times, of the Puritan in private life, in the cottage, in the closet, in the sanctuary, and at his daily toil! It is only through some heroic deed, letting in faintly the light of other days, that we can catch a glimpse of our fathers as they were, and look up those long vistas of the infinite past which

* See Note 32.

retire into such deep obscurity. A few graphic touches in quaint chronicles,—some scraps of diaries, journals, and letters: these are to the historian what fossil remains are to the geologist—all that we possess, out of which to form an imaginary picture of the old Puritan world. We feel this—painfully feel it—as we visit our fathers' graves; and we are almost tempted to indulge a vain wish, that we could disinter the secrets that are there concealed, that we could raise to life the scenes, incidents, conversations, and acts, now lost in darkness and silence. Could that wish be gratified, what lives of the Puritans might be written! We doubt not the biographer might then vie with the novelist, in the relation of truth strange as fiction, in the description of scenes as romantic as ever entered the mind of Scott, but fraught with far more precious lessons.

But enough is preserved respecting these men to convince us of their virtues, piety, and worth. Distinguished as many of them were by mental superiority and literary attainments, it was their spiritual excellence which imparted to them, as a class, their highest distinction. Their piety was intimately connected with their peculiar views of theology and ecclesiastical discipline. Their humble and devout frame of mind led them to adopt the most spiritual and evangelical conceptions of Christianity, and to strive after the utmost purity, and the nearest resemblance to the Divine models in Church government. Their system was not so much a theory elaborated by study and speculation, as a form of spiritual life and activity produced and supported by their piety. Their reformation was

like Luther's,—a reformation beginning in Christian experience, in the struggles of the heart, in inward pantings after light, and love, and excellence. They wanted to attain to greater spirituality in their faith, in their discipline, in all their actions. They did not form a theory first, and then work by it; but they were led on by the inward life of religion step by step,—their theory, in the meanwhile, gradually evolving itself before their view. They were led by a way that they knew not, like Israel through the desert, by God's guidance, farther and farther from the Egypt of error, formalism, and intolerance, till, after long wandering and severe discipline, the pillar of cloud and fire brought them to the borders of the Promised Land of religious truth, spirituality, and freedom.

Piety was the parent of their system, and the support of it. They derived no aid from what was prescriptive, adventitious, antique, and romantic; no aid from what is pompous in ceremonial and imposing in worship; no aid from the power of long-continued and venerable associations in the popular mind;—and whatever of patronage, at any time, might be conferred on them by the civil power, was, to say the least, of very questionable tendency—perhaps impairing their spiritual, as much as it ministered to their political strength. For the most part, their history is one of conflict; the history of a band of men, linked together by the force of sympathy, entering a protest against the vices of the world and the secularity of the Church,—against abuses and errors, venerable because of their antiquity, and formidable because of their being founded on the strongest prejudices of mankind. It is a history of

self-denial and sacrifice, confessorship and imprisonment, suffering and death. In the circumstances of their lot, the Puritans were veritable successors of the men who had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; who were stoned and sawn asunder; were tempted; were slain by the sword; who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); who wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Disciples of such a peculiar system, and the victims of such afflictive circumstances,—holding an unpopular, because spiritual creed,—smitten and crushed by the world, because they were not of it,—what could have supported them—what could have given heroism to their hearts, and life to their labours, and perpetuity to their profession, but heaven-born piety?

History as well as science has her idols of the *tribe*; and the *cave*, the *market*, and the *theatre*;—images, illusions, fallacies, needing some Prospero-wand like that of Bacon to dissipate them for ever.* And, surely, the Puritans have long suffered under the foul enchantment of the last of these—the “idol” of the theatre, springing from long-cherished prejudices, from fabulous stories handed down from generation to generation, and especially from the authority of great names, which have given to falsehood the currency of historic truth. The name of Puritan has been taken as a synonyme for all that is base, canting, and hypocritical. Thus, to apply a remark made by Locke, “Independent

* Nov. Organum, lib. i. § 52.

ideas of no alliance to one another have been so coupled in the minds of many, that they always appear together." And, as the same author further remarks,— "When men are under this deceit they applaud themselves as champions for truth, when, indeed, they are contending for error, and the confusion of two different ideas, which a customary connexion of them in their minds hath to them made in effect but one, fills their heads with false views and their reasonings with false consequences."* In this way a certain class of writers and talkers have been so accustomed to connect the idea of hypocrisy with the idea of Puritanism, that the former invariably rises up in their imagination as the clothing of the latter; so that their Puritan is always arrayed in false colours—an idol of the brain, a phantasm of the stage, not the true and real hero of history. It is mournful to think of men beloved by God being thus caricatured and maligned by some of their fellow-men, who would not have been worthy to unloose their shoes; and, if now those sainted ones know and notice aught of what goes on in this lower world, it must be with dignified pity that they look down from their place of glory and repose upon their infatuated detractors. To search into the true history of these Spiritual Heroes, to form accurate conceptions of their characters, sufferings, and deeds, is an employment worthy of the filial love of those who regard them as their moral ancestry. It is a debt they owe to departed worth, and the discharge of the duty will be of benefit to those who perform it; for communion with the characters of good men in former times is the way

* Essay on the Human Understanding, book ii. chap. 33, § 18.

to perpetuate, as well as to memorialize, their virtues. The greatest honour to the Puritans now can be rendered neither by the eulogy of the historian, the ode of the poet, nor the monument of the sculptor, but by the imitation of posterity. And, as it is in art, so it is in morals, the highest kind of imitation consists in catching the spirit of the original. Men must not suppose that resemblance to the Puritans of the olden time consists in a rigid adherence to their forms, a servile copying of their precise habits, customs, and manners; but in the maintenance of their noble principles and the cultivation of their heroic spirit. We do not want men attired in the clothes of the Puritans, but men animated by the souls of the Puritans. The mere possession of their mantle will never enable any to repeat their miracles. Vain will be the waving of the venerated robe—vain the utterance of the prophetic cry, “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?”—if “the spirit and power of Elias” be not there.

Such are our thoughts while musing amidst the Puritan burial-places of old England. And now, farewell, ye loved and venerated ones! You deserved a better fate than you met with in this world, and better memorials than have been reared to your honour since you left it. But your record is above, and the all-seeing eye of Heaven watches over your dust!

Farewell to Oakington! farewell to the Graves of the Puritans! England has many time-worn and ivy-crowned ruins in her old cities and villages, dear to the antiquary and the poet,—edifices now crumbling away in silence and solitude, but once the scenes of

activity and life—castles that resounded with the minstrel's lyre, and abbeys and churches that echoed with "the service of song;"—but of all her ruins, the remains of her illustrious sons, now crumbled into dust and ashes, but once inhabited by noble, active souls, thrilling with the richest music of genius and piety, are the most sacred and precious. They hallow their resting-places,—they cover them with holy recollections,—they re-awaken the train of associations which struck the mind of the Hebrew patriot when he spake "of the land of his fathers' sepulchres." Imbued with these sentiments, while I love to wander among the stately ruins of our ancient architecture, still more do I love to sit on the grassy hillock of some Puritan grave, and there to muse over the crumbled heaps of those noble temples, which God himself hath built and sanctified, and will one day re-edify.

" Their dust and ruins that remain
Are precious in our eyes;
Those ruins shall be built again,
And all that dust shall rise."

NOTES.

NOTE [1]. Page 3.

OTHER congregations of a similar character are mentioned as existing in other places, especially in Suffolk and Essex. There was a considerable one at Stoke, in Suffolk, whose spiritual prosperity and sufferings under persecution are detailed by Foxe, vol. iii. 773. It has been concluded by some that there were two congregations in London, and that Mr. Rose, whom Foxe mentions, a famous preacher early in the reign of Henry VIII., was not a pastor of the church we are describing. Strype, however, as stated on p. 4, speaks of him as belonging to it.

NOTE [2]. Page 7.

Mary, in 1556, issued a commission against the Lollards, as the Reformers were called. They were empowered to impose an oath on whom they pleased, to answer what should be demanded of them; whereby they were to swear in effect to accuse themselves and all their friends that were of the same opinion and held the same doctrine. Sir Roger de Chomley was one of the commissioners; "a judge, but a turn-coat, and a covetous man."—*Strype, Annals*, vol. i. 57.

NOTE [3]. Page 16.

"Thomas Lever had been Master of St. John's, Cambridge, from which he was ejected on Queen Mary's accession, and went abroad to Frankfort, Zurich, and other places. He was afterwards preferred to a prebend at Durham, of which he

was deprived for Nonconformity, though he was allowed to retain the mastership of Sherborn Hospital, which he held till his death, in 1577."—*Zurich Letters*, vol. ii. note, 147.

NOTE [4]. Page 19.

There was much correspondence between the Protestants who remained in England and their exiled brethren. Sometimes messengers were sent from one to the other. "Upon any cases of difficulty or emergency, this congregation sent some of their members beyond sea, to some of the learned exiles there, for their resolution, counsel, and advice, and so they returned again to the flock."—*Strype, Memorials*, vol. v. p. 288.

NOTE [5]. Page 21.

Dr. Story said, "He wished he had done more than he did, and that he and others had been more vehement in executing the laws; and impudently told the House how he threw a fagot into the face of one (an earwig, as he styled him,) at the stake at Uxbridge, as he was singing a psalm, and set a bush of thorns under his feet; and that it was his counsel to pluck down men of eminency that were heretics, as well as the more ordinary sort,—it grieved him that they laboured only about the young and little twigs, whereas they should have struck at the root," meaning Queen Elizabeth.—*Strype, Annals*, vol. i. p. 115.

NOTE [6]. Page 27.

"They concluded, with universal consent of all present, not to answer aloud after the minister, nor to use the Litany and surplice; but that the public service should begin with a general confession of sins, then the people to sing a psalm in metre in a plain tune, after which the minister to pray for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and so proceed to the sermon; after sermon, a general prayer for all estates, and particularly for England, at the end of which was joined the Lord's Prayer, and a rehearsal of the articles of belief; then the people were to sing another psalm, and the minister to dismiss them with a blessing."—*Neal*, vol. i. p. 109.

NOTE [7]. Page 29.

Strange that Jewel, after all he had written in his letters about vestments, &c., should refuse to admit Humphrey to a

living in the diocese of Salisbury.—*Strype*, ii. 133. Any one acquainted with the history of the period, will be struck on reading the "Zurich Letters" with the very different tone of sentiment, in relation to vestments and such matters, expressed by Jewel and others in their letters to the Continental Reformers, from that which they manifested in their conduct towards the more strict of their Puritan brethren. An amusing illustration of the effect produced on some of them by being made bishops is afforded in the life of Aylmer, Bishop of London. "Come off, ye Bishops," said he, in a book he published in earlier days; "away with your superfluities; yield up your thousands; be content with hundreds, as they be in other reformed Churches, where be as great learned men as you are; let your portion be priest-like, and not prince-like; let the queen have the rest of your temporalities and other lands, to maintain those wars which you procured; that every parish might have its preacher, every city its superintendent, to live honestly and not pompously. I would our countryman Wickliffe's book, 'De Ecclesiâ,' were in print; then should ye see that your wrinches and cavillations be nothing worth." When he became a bishop, he was put in mind of this passage. "Ah," said he, "when I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child."—*Neal*, vol. i. p. 442. Spenser, in delicate satire, ridicules Aylmer in "The Shepherd's Calendar," under the anagrammatic name of Morell.

NOTE [8]. Page 33.

"The lordship or civil government of bishops is utterly unlawful. My reason is this,—The kingdom of Christ is only a spiritual government; but the government of the Church is a part of the kingdom of Christ; and therefore the government of the Church is only a spiritual government. . . . There are no chariots that go so swift in victory as the word of truth; no terror in the world that so shaketh the bowels, and maketh the thoughts to tremble, as the sword of the Spirit. There is no sceptre that reacheth so wide a dominion as the law of the majesty of God, which is written in the hearts of all the world, and condemneth all flesh before the majesty of God. All other force is but little, and we may either withstand it or fly from it. But the power of the word is such as shall pass through all stops and hinderances."—*Strype, Annals*, vol. ii. p. 401.

NOTE [9]. Page 42.

Robert Brown has been reckoned by some the father of English Congregationalism. The want of personal religion which distinguished that unhappy man, his base apostacy, and his immoral conduct after his restoration to the ministry of the Church of England, have covered his name with an amount of disgrace which the enemies of Nonconformity have ever been anxious to associate with that branch of Dissenters to which they have supposed him to belong. But here prejudice has perverted historic truth. The Independents never acknowledged Brown as their apostle. "First," says Greenwood, "you term us Brownists and Donatists, whereas I never conversed with the men nor their writings. Brown is a member of your Church—your brother,—and all Brownists do frequent your assemblies."—*Hanbury's Mem.* vol. i. p. 69.

NOTE [10]. Page 45.

Mr. Francis Johnson had been preacher to the English Company of the Staple at Middleburgh in Zealand, and was at that time a zealous opponent of Independency. When Barrow and Greenwood's refutation of Gifford was being printed privately at Middleburgh, he discovered the secret, informed against the printers, and caused the book to be publicly burnt. But he picked up one, that he might see the errors it contained; and on reading it, found what he could not answer. He crossed the seas, and came to London to confer with the authors. After which he was so satisfied that he joined himself to their society in London.—*Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, p. 425.

NOTE [11]. Page 55.

Stow says he was hanged with a small audience of beholders. Weever, in his "Funeral Monuments," p. 56, gives some rude and abusive couplets, composed by a certain northern rhymers, upon poor Penry, under the notion of his being concerned in the Marprelate Tracts.

NOTE [12]. Page 70.

The ecclesiastical order of this society is explained in the following documents, written in 1618:—

"Touching the ecclesiastical ministry, namely, of pastors

for teaching, elders for ruling, and deacons for distributing the Church's contributions, as also for the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we do wholly and in all points agree with the French Reformed Churches, according to their public confessions of faith, though some small differences.

"The oath of supremacy we shall willingly take, if it be required of us, if that convenient satisfaction be not given by our taking the oath of allegiance.

"JOHN ROBINSON.
WILLIAM BREWSTER."

The small differences between themselves and the French Churches, in a second document, they thus explain:—

"1. Their ministers do pray with their heads covered; we uncovered.

"2. We choose none for governing elders but such as are able to teach; which ability they do not require.

"3. Their elders and deacons are annual, or at most for two or three years; ours perpetual.

"4. Our elders do administer their office in admonitions and excommunications, for public scandals, publicly and before the congregation; theirs more privately, and in their consistories.

"5. We do administer baptism only to such infants as whereof the one parent, at the least, is of some church, which some of their churches do not observe, although in it our practice accords with their public confession and the judgment of the most learned amongst them."

NOTE [13]. Page 80.

The patent was taken out in the name of John Wincob, a relation to the Countess of Lincoln, who intended to go with them. Several members of her family actually joined the settlers afterwards; and of her daughter, the Lady Arabella, who died at Massachusetts, 1630, it is remarked, "She came from a paradise of plenty and pleasure, in the family of a noble earldom, into a wilderness of wants, and took New England in her way to heaven."

NOTE [14]. Page 95.

Upon the disuse of the theatre for dramatic purposes, its site again reverted to the service of religion, (it had formerly

belonged to St. Saviour's Priory,) and was formed into a meeting-house for Protestant Dissenters, occupying a space of 2,000 square feet. The structure was capacious, though built of wood, and it contained three galleries.—*See Wilkinson's Londina Illustrata.*

NOTE [15]. Page 103.

There can be no doubt that Lord Brooke was a member of an Independent church; and a tradition is current in Warwickshire, that when in the church assembly, he would be called by his untitled name, "Robert Greville,"—but having crossed the threshold, he was "Lord Brooke" again. I have this tradition on the authority of Mr. Brooke, the laborious author of the "Lives of the Puritans." It may be observed, that Lord Brooke's treatise was highly praised by Milton.

NOTE [16]. Page 103.

As early as the year 1635, Lords Brooke and Say had some thoughts of emigrating to New England, because the excesses of the Court threatened the liberties of their country; and they even sent over an agent to prepare a report for them, which received the name of Saybrooke,—but a change in the prospects of the nation altered their purpose.

NOTE [17]. Page 109.

On the 19th December, 1642, a speech was published, purporting to have been delivered by Lord Brooke against any terms of accommodation, in reply to one by Lord Pembroke in favour of peace. It breathes a stern and bitter spirit; but we learn from Clarendon in his Life (p. 955, Oxf. Edit. of his Works,) that this publication was a deliberate forgery. The Chancellor, however, relates the story of its fabrication with some glee as an excellent joke.

NOTE [18]. Page 114.

Another curious story of the extreme conscientiousness of the Commonwealthsmen in such matters is related respecting Cromwell. Helledon House, near Buckingham, being besieged and taken by him, the small garrison capitulated to march out with arms and baggage. As soon as they were out

of the gate, one of Cromwell's soldiers snatched off the Governor's hat. He immediately complained to the General of the fellow's insolence and breach of the capitulation. "Sir," says Cromwell, "if you can point out the man, or I can discover him, I promise you he shall not go unpunished. In the meantime," taking off his beaver which he had on his head, "be pleased to accept this hat instead of your own."—*King's Anecdotes*.

NOTE [19]. Page 114.

Mr. Hanbury raises a doubt respecting the correctness of this date, appealing to the authority of Rushworth in his Collections, who states that Lord Brooke was killed on the 1st of March; but that Rushworth here fell into an error, and that the date given by all other historians is correct, appears from the pamphlet published immediately after Brooke's death by one of his own party, entitled "England's Loss and Lamentation," on the title-page of which it is stated that he was slain on the 2nd of March, 1642. The coat which he wore when shot is preserved at Warwick Castle, and an inscription is fixed on the wall of the house where he was slain.

NOTE [20]. Page 119.

In the first edition of the "Saints' Rest," Baxter introduces the names of Brooke, Pym, and Hampden, as persons whom he expected to meet in heaven. In later editions their names were omitted. "The need," says Baxter, "which I perceived of taking away from before such men as Dr. Jane, anything which they might stumble at, made me blot out the names of Lord Brooke, Pym, and Hampden, in all the impressions of the book that were made since 1659, yet this did not satisfy. But I must tell the reader, that I did it not as changing my judgment of the persons well known to the world."

Elegies were published on the death of Lord Brooke, more remarkable for extravagance than poetic merit; and his virtues were also celebrated in the pamphlet, entitled "England's Loss and Lamentation." He was much beloved and honoured by the Puritans. Goodwin dedicated to him his "Child of Light walking in Darkness," styling him, "summi candoris, pietatis ac literarum cultor fautorque," &c.

Samuel Clarke, the Puritan minister of Bennet Fink, London, in his autobiography, refers to him. "I was by the good providence of God unexpectedly sent for by Robert Lord

Brooke (who was then a young man and unmarried) to bestow a sermon upon him in his house at Wedgnoek Park, not far from Warwick, whither (though with much reluctance, he being a stranger to me,) I went and preached before him, and found such approbation, that he desired me to be his household chaplain; but such a life not suiting with my estate (being married), nor with my affections, with humble thanks I refused it, yet found him a fast and faithful friend to me in all his life after." Clarke became preacher at Warwick; and during his residence there, he says he was an instrument of much good to Lord Brooke's family, then residing for the most part in Warwick Castle. Brooke gave this simple-hearted, pious, and learned man, the living of Alcester.

NOTE [23]. Page 133.

The Parliament party, in some places, anticipated resistance to their proceedings. At a Court of Mayoralty, Norwich, held 12th of July, 1643, it was "ordered that Captain Leve-well Sherwood shall watch-guard the city to-morrow the 13th instant, in regard that the vow and covenant is then to be taken, for the appeasing of any stir or tumults that may arise in the said city." In some places the Covenant was not rigorously enforced. Baxter prevented his people from taking it, lest it should prove a snare to their consciences.

In the archives of the Norwich Corporation, I have noticed copies of the League and Covenant, with the signatures of many inhabitants in the different parishes of the city. In the Original Papers, published by the Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society, is one relating to this subject:—"The Covenant," adds the writer, "either in print or writing, is now rarely found in our parishes, because I apprehend in most of them it was torn out of the books, or the rolls were destroyed, at the Restoration. Indeed, all the documents of this period are scarce; their preservation would have furnished very awkward evidence against many influential families throughout the realm, but particularly against the clergy of the associated counties in the event of a restoration. Burnet, I think, mentions that the Cavalier party counted exactly 666 words, the number of Antichrist in the Apocalypse, in the Solemn League and Covenant."—*Original Papers*, p. 294.

NOTE [24]. Page 159.

"During the usurpation the Latin prayers were discontinued; but some of the members, John Fell, John Dolben Allestree, and others, afterwards men of eminence in the Church, performed the Common Prayer in the lodgings of the celebrated Dr. Willis, in Canterbury Quadrangle, and afterwards in his house, opposite Merton College Chapel, and the practice continued until the Restoration. Dr. Willis's house afterwards became an Independent meeting. In the museum of the Dolby family, in Northamptonshire, is a fine painting by Sir Peter Lely, grounded on the above circumstance. A copy of this picture was presented to the Society, and placed in the hall."—*Chalmers' Oxford*, vol. ii. p. 311.

NOTE [25]. Page 186.

This is a free translation of some of South's Latin verses:—

"Tu dux pariter terræ domitorq; profundi,
Componunt laudes cuncta elementa tuas.
Cui mens alta subest pelagoq; profundior ipso,
Cujus fama sonat, quam procul unda sonat.
Si currum ascendas, domito pæne orbe triumphans,
Incurrus aderunt axis uterq; tuos.
Inclusam populi tua fert vagina salutem,
Ut lateri hinc possit semper adesse tuo.
Tu poteras solus motos componere fluctus,
Solut Neptunum sub tua vincla dare.
Magna simul fortis vicisti et multa, trophæis
Ut mare, sic pariter cedit arena tuis.
Nomine pacifico gestas insignia pacis
Blandaque per titulos serpit oliva tuos.
Lesbon Abydos amat; Batavas colit Anglia terras;
Insula te fauto facta beata duce,
Insula quam pelagus simul et victoria cingit,
Quæq; (quod his præstat) cingitur ense tuo."

It is a little singular that Dr. South, notwithstanding his vituperation against the Puritans, was on terms of the closest intimacy with Samuel Jones, a Dissenting minister in Glamorganshire. The following letter of the Doctor's is preserved among the Ayscough MSS. (4276), and evinces that there was at least one poor Puritan whom he loved and honoured. We have here the bright side of South's character:—

"March 12, 1688.

"MOST DEAR AND HONOURED FRIEND,—If I could be ashamed to be overcome by you in anything, it should be to

be thus overcome in kindness, and, having received from you so much, to have returned so little. Your love has still the advantage of prevention, the sure effect of great activity; so that all I can express can reach no farther than gratitude, which, at the best, is but return and imitation,—mean things compared with what they can but write after.

“Dear Sir, you speak of my sealing your pardon; but your love, I am sure, is the object of another thing, unless that saying should take place, that favours themselves are scarce pardoned when they cannot be recompensed. I most heartily confess that I find that stronger reality of affection in you, and that upon no ground on my part but what entirely your own sweet disposition and inclination creates to itself, that I am amazed at what I see and find, having elsewhere seen and found so much to the contrary.

“I have my present abode at Westminster, but God knows I look not on that or on any place else almost as an abode, while I see the whole nation so unsettled. I can say as you do, that (thanks be to God) I enjoy my health, and in externals want nothing but faithful and suitable converse; for there may be want of that where there is none of company. And were you disengaged, as I am, I could even beg of you to come and live with me, for I know none but yourself and one more, who also is planted afar off, with many little ones about him, who, both in respect of learning and affection, could sweeten my life and promote my studies. But afar off as you are, you are like now and then to be troubled with me, having the convenience of writing to you. Our friend, Dr. Lloyd, I suppose you know is married, and, in my judgment, very happily. He is an honest and ingenious person, and I doubt not God has a blessing in store for him. Dear Sir, I cannot but thank you for all your love, and pray that He would requite it to you and yours who alone can. I am, I can assure you,

“Your ever faithful and affectionate Friend,

“ROBERT SOUTH.”

“*For the Rev. and his honoured friend, Mr.*

Samuel Jones, at Codreken, in Glamorganshire, South Wales, these.”

This Mr. Jones was a remarkable man. He had a great reputation for learning and piety, and suffered much for his Nonconformity. It was once reported, just before he died, that he had renounced his Dissenting principles, which report drew from him the following avowal in a letter to a friend:—

"I declare to you and all the world, as in the words of a dying man, that I had not at the time referred to, and have not since, the least check from my own conscience for my non-submission to those impositions which were then made the indispensable terms of communion with the Church of England. I confess I had then, and have still, a very honourable respect for the able and conscientious ministers of it. But to declare an unfeigned assent and consent, &c., to deny my former ordination, to swallow several oaths, and to crouch under the burden of the other impositions, were such blocks which the law had laid at the Church door, that upon mature consideration I could not, durst not then, and dare not now leap over, though to save my credit and livelihood, though to gain a dignity and preferment, without odious hypocrisy, and the overthrowing of my inward peace, which is and ought to be dearer to me than my life."—*Non. Mem.* vol. iii. p. 502.

I would here observe that I am much indebted to Mr. Orme for his references to Oxford men in his "Life of Owen." But in one instance he has misled me. Trusting to his statement, that Penn was a student in Christ Church when Owen was Dean, supported as that statement is by a reference to Birch's "Life of Tillotson," I was led to introduce the illustrious Quaker as a gownsmen of the University in Owen's time. On further examination, I discover that Penn was not entered at Christ Church till the year 1660, when Owen had left.

NOTE [26]. Page 234.

This Mr. Tillinghurst, or Tillinghast (as his name is sometimes spelt), was rather a remarkable person. In that age of industrious authorship, he produced several works. In 1642 he published a sermon, entitled "Demetrius' Opposition to Reformation." In 1654, a book entitled "Knowledge of the Times;" and also six several "Treatises" on theological subjects issued from the press. But his chief publication was entitled "Generation Work; or, that work, or those works, which the way or manner of God's dispensations in the age a Saint lives in calls him to." A second part, containing an "Exposition of the Seven Vials;" and a third part, upon the "Prophecy of the Two Witnesses," speedily followed. His "Eight Last Sermons" were edited by Christopher Feake, and published in 1655; and his Remains, under the title of "Elijah's Mantle," in 1657. He seems to have devoted much of his time to the study of prophecy, and was a strenuous upholder of the doctrine of the personal reign of Christ. He

belonged to the Fifth Monarchy men. There appear to have been during the Commonwealth three classes who bore that appellation.—1. Mere Millennarians; 2. Theoretical Theocracists, advocates for a sort of Divine dominion, and generally opposed to Cromwell's Protectorship; and 3. Practical Theocracists, men who thought it right to strive to overturn even by force the existing government, that the way might be opened for God and his saints to rule. Tillinghamurst may, perhaps, be numbered with the second class. He argued from the prophecies with great zeal, that the time was at hand for the setting up of Christ's visible kingdom among men. Tillinghamurst was some time Rector of Tarring Neville, then Rector of Strete in Sussex. Afterwards he went to Yarmouth; then to Trunch, where he wrote his "Generation Work." He was evidently a man of ardent piety, but wild and enthusiastic in his notions of prophecy. Feake, a very violent Fifth Monarchy man, was a great admirer of Tillinghamurst. He informs us that Tillinghamurst went to London in the spring of 1655, or a few months earlier. "The object of his visit was first to speak his mind to the great man Oliver Cromwell; and he did bear his testimony to his face, in the first place, in the presence of divers witnesses, in such a way of plainness and pity to him, who was guilty of such open abominations, that undoubtedly it will be of use hereafter to the stopping of the mouth of all great flatterers: secondly, to preach in favour of a Fifth Monarchy: and, thirdly, to travel from prison to prison where any of the servants of Christ were shut up. He was spirited from the Lord to do much work in a little time."—*Feake's Preface to Tillinghamurst's Eight Last Sermons.*

Cromwell alludes to Tillinghamurst, in a letter to Fleetwood, preserved in Thurloe's State Papers, vol. iii. p. 572. Rumours unfriendly to Cromwell, especially respecting his assuming the crown, had reached Fleetwood. These rumours the Lord Protector contradicts; and goes on to say, "Use this bearer, Mr. Brewster, kindly,—let him be near you; indeed, he is a very holy, able man; trust me you will find him so. He was a bosom friend of Mr. Tillinghamurst; ask him of him; you will thereby know Mr. Tillinghamurst's spirit. This gentleman brought him to me a little before he died; and Mr. Cradock, Mr. Throughton, a godly minister, being by with himself, who cried shame."

Mr. Carlyle, among his dramatic and admirable sketches in his edition of "Cromwell's Letters," vol. iii. p. 137, remarks upon this letter:—"Godly Mr. Tillinghamurst, so noble a phenomenon to Oliver and Fleetwood, is to us fallen altogether

silent,—seemingly a very godly preacher, of very modest nature, who, in his old days being brought once before the Lord Protector, cried it was a shame to trouble any Lord Protector or sovereign prince with the like of him.” It appears from the above notices that Tillinghurst is not altogether fallen silent, and that he was not so very remarkable for his modesty. Probably, Cromwell’s obscure allusion to Tillinghurst was by no means intended to be commendatory, and relates to the interview mentioned by Feake. “Shame!” was probably the cry of Mr. Cradock or Mr. Throughton at Mr. Tillinghurst’s presumption. It speaks well for Cromwell, that he showed no disposition to be revenged upon this plain-spoken man. He had to bear a good deal of opposition from such well-meaning, but misguided persons. Feake seems to have been a different character from Tillinghurst, and his extreme violence often brought him into trouble. There is a curious letter respecting him among the Ayscough MSS. vol. iv. p. 300.

The following letter from Mr. Bridge to a person in London may be read in connexion with the chapter on the East Anglian Churches. It relates to the income of the Pastors, and furnishes some interesting particulars:—

“16th Aug. 1655.

“HONOURED SIR,

“I have received your letters, and am glad that you are so sensible of the concerns of our Lord Christ in the ministry of his word.

“The Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in Norfolk are many; and, in so short a time as one day, I am not able to inquire into their state and condition. But having lately received a letter from Mr. Philip Nye, in reference to the Congregational, I have inquired after them the more diligently, and send you the names of all those churches in Norfolk, with the names of their pastors, the towns where they are seated, and the worth of their livings, so near as I can.

“The Presbyterian Churches I have less acquaintance with; and if you please to give me longer time to inquire, I shall serve you therein. Only, Sir, I can tell you now that here are four ministers in this town, and no set maintenance for any, unless 100*l.* which I have from the State, given me by the Long Parliament. The other ministers are all good men and worthy, and no revenue but the people’s charity.

“Six miles from us there is a market-town, and the only

great town in the island; the living is not worth 40*l.* a-year. If 50*l.* may be laid to it, and a good man put into the place, it would be very influential upon the whole island. The gift of the living belongs to the Lord Protector. The town hath been malignant, called Laystoffe, known to his Highness, being part of the first-fruits of his great labours. Much service might be done for Christ in settling this place; and if the Lord will give your hearts to pity this great town, many souls will bless God for your bowels. I will trouble you no further, but present this thing to your goodness, and yourself to the grace of God, who is able to supply all our wants according to his riches in glory, by Jesus Christ, in whom I continue,

“ Sir,

“ Yours in all Christian observance,

“ WILLIAM BRIDGE.

“ List of the Independent Teachers who are Pastors of Churches in the County of Norfolk:—

“ 1. Church at Norwich. Pastor, Mr. — Armitage, who hath an augmentation already.

“ 2. Church at Yarmouth. Mr. — Tooky, Teacher; Mr. Bridge, Pastor, who hath 100*l.* a-year from the State.

“ 3. Church at North Walsom, a market-town. Pastor, Mr. Brabiter. The living about 40*l.* per annum.

“ 4. Church at Windham, a market-town. Pastor, Mr. Money. He hath no augmentation already.

“ 5. Church at Hapton, a small town, and small living. No Pastor; Mr. Wale being gone to Ireland.

“ 6. Church at Tunsted and Slowly. No Pastor. The revenue of both about 80*l.*

“ 7. Church at Alby and Thwait. Pastor, Mr. Nat. Brewster. The living about 50*l.*

“ 8. Church at Lesetingham. Pastor, Mr. Cushin. The living about 100*l.*

“ 9. Church at Fowlsham. Mr. Worts, Pastor. The worth of the living known to Major-General Skippon.

“ 10. Church at Edgefield. Pastor, Mr. Martin. The living competent.”

This letter is copied from Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa*.

NOTE [27]. Page 305.

The following anecdote respecting Dr. Owen is related in the MS. life of him before referred to. The circumstance is said to have happened about the time that Charles's Indulgence was issued:—

“The Doctor now thinks he may visit his friends at Oxford, his concerns being also thereabouts, but with all privacy imaginable. But notwithstanding he was taken notice of, and intelligence was given of the very house where he lay, upon which troopers came knocking at the door; the mistress of the house comes down and boldly opens the door, and asks what they would have. They ask her whether she has any lodgers in the house. Instead of giving a direct answer to the question, she asked whether they sought for Dr. Owen? ‘Yes,’ say they. She tells them, ‘The Doctor went from my house this morning betimes.’ Upon this they presently rode away; and in the meantime the Doctor (who she really thought had been gone, as he told her he intended,) rises, and hastes away to a field near the house, where he ordered his horse to be brought him, and rides away immediately to London.”

NOTE [28]. Page 327.

James Hannot was educated at an academy at Newington Green, under the care of that polite and profound scholar, the Reverend Charles Morton, where he had great advantages for learning and very agreeable society. Among his schoolfellows were Mr. Timothy Cruso, Nathaniel Taylor, Mr. Owen, Samuel Wesley, and Daniel Defoe.—*Defoe's Life and Times*, vol. i. pp. 21—23.

NOTE [29]. Page 330.

A beautiful instance of solicitude for spiritual prosperity as a Church is given in the Wattisfield Church-Book. “The deaths of several of their small number, and especially of the men, made this Church very thoughtful, and engaged them in a serious consideration of the following questions, which were spoken to by several brethren:—

“What are those graces in the exercise of which a Church may hope from the word of God to be blessed and built up?

“On the contrary, what are the sins which, according to the Scriptures, do chiefly lead to un-churching, or removing the candlestick, and which may be most likely to this day to provoke thereunto?”

NOTE [30]. Page 347.

There is another interview which Calamy mentions, which I never read of without wishing I could know all that was said on the occasion. "I well remember that he himself once informed me," says Calamy, "of some very private conversation he had with that prince (William III.) not long before his death. Among other things, the King asked him a great many questions about his old Master Oliver, as he called him, and seemed not a little pleased with the answers that were returned to some of his questions." What were those answers? They would, perhaps, throw some additional light on the now popular question of Oliver's character.

NOTE [31]. Page 359.

"The Congregational Churches of the last century," observes Mr. Harmer, (*Miscell. Works*, p. 152,) "were not so rigid as not to admit of the meetings of their people together in distinct assemblies, when their circumstances made it of consequence for them so to do; though, like the Primitive Churches, they assembled in one congregation in times of particular solemnity. In like manner, in times of persecution, these Churches were often obliged to meet in small parties, and hold distinct assemblies, for their better concealment, which neither was, nor reasonably could be, thought to be contradictory to their opinion—that Christian Churches ought to be Congregational." Mr. Harmer considered a multiplicity of Independent Churches in one city or district to be a deviation from primitive practice.

NOTE [32]. Page 362.

In connexion with the three graves at Oakington, it may be noticed that there is a similar group in the graveyard of Morley Chapel, near Leeds, Yorkshire.

The three following ejected ministers there sleep together:—Robert Pickeringe, who, as stated on the tombstone, "counted himself the meanest servant in the work of Jesus Christ:" he was of Sydney College, Cambridge, and died October 11, 1680.—Mr. Joseph Dawson, according to Calamy, "of very venerable aspect, a hard student, an affectionate preacher; who

naturally cared for the good of souls, unwearied in labours, very successful in his ministry, and had a good report of all men: he expired June 26, 1709.—Mr. William Hawden, a zealous promoter of what was good, and one of magnanimity and resolution, who departed this life 26th August, 1699. “When the Duke of Monmouth landed, he was sent prisoner to Hull, and thence conveyed to York Castle, where the Commissioners required he should be bound to his good behaviour, which he peremptorily refused, knowing no occasion for it; but the matter was compromised, upon a friend passing his word for him.”

Near these ejected ministers repose the remains of Samuel Bailly, Minister of the Gospel at Morley and Topcliffe, who died December 6, 1675.

There is, perhaps, no Nonconformist place of worship in England so remarkable in its appearance and history as the Chapel at Morley. It is a low, wide-roofed building, with projecting windows in the roof, and a part at the east end, which looks like a chancel. It is small; and has internally the aspect of an old rustic parish-church. It seems to have been built in the reign of Elizabeth, and to have been originally used as a tithe-barn. The first change in the structure probably occurred in the reign of James I. or Charles I., when it was converted into a place of worship. The greatest improvement of it was under the Commonwealth. It certainly was then employed as a Chapel, as this is testified by the ancient scrolls and inscriptions on the walls. A trust-deed was executed in 1650 expressly mentioning “the Chapel,” which could have been no other than this edifice. Thomas Lord Viscount Saville, Earl of Sussex, Lord of the Manor in 1650, then living at Howley Hall, granted to certain trustees of the Presbyterian denomination a lease for 500 years of the Chapel premises, with some land, and other buildings, and all the tithes thereto belonging, at an annual rent of 20s., for the benefit of a *preaching* minister. Among the trustees was Thomas Otes, an old Republican officer, and afterwards a schoolmaster, who was concerned in the Farnley Wood Plot; and Major Thomas Greethed, another Republican officer, who fought under Fairfax. After the Restoration, the premises came into the possession of the Episcopalian party. The royal arms were put up, which still remain there; and passages of Scripture were inscribed on the walls, enjoining loyalty. One of them is—“My son, fear thou the Lord, and meddle not with them that are given to change.” But, in

consequence of the Revolution of 1688, Nonconformists obtained liberty to preach and worship; and then, because the place while held by Episcopalians was deserted by the people, who assembled elsewhere; and because there was no fund for the payment of a curate, and the Vicar of Batley became tired of supporting it, the Chapel was surrendered again to the Nonconformists, who obtained a licence, built a minister's house, and have had the premises in their possession ever since.

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